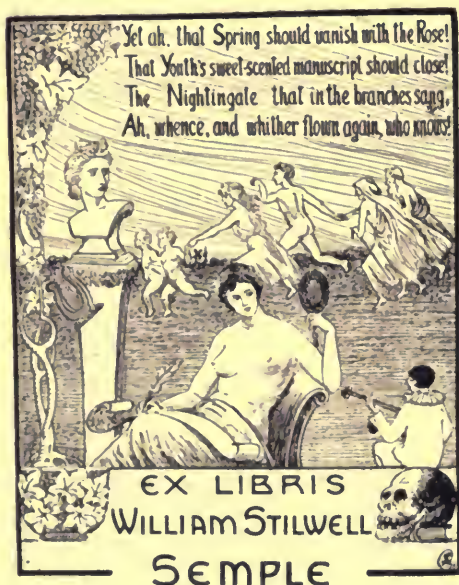


BESS OF
HARDWICK
AND HER CIRCLE

John



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BESS OF HARDWICK
AND HER CIRCLE

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

A LADY OF THE REGENCY

JOURNEYMAN LOVE

THE APPRENTICE

TALES OF RYE TOWN

THE LABOURER'S COMEDY

THE ENCHANTED GARDEN

THE EASY-GO-LUCKIES

THE STAIRWAY OF HONOUR

HAPPINESS



Painted by Hans Holbein the Younger, 1533-1534, oil on wood.

Elizabeth, Countess of Shrewsbury

BESS OF HARDWICK AND HER CIRCLE

BY
MAUD STEPNEY RAWSON

WITH THIRTY-EIGHT ILLUSTRATIONS
INCLUDING A PHOTOGRAVURE FRONTISPIECE

NEW YORK
JOHN LANE COMPANY
MCMX

NOTHING IS TO BE
LEFT OUT OF IT

Printed in Great Britain

TO MY HUSBAND

TO you belongs, for many a reason, this, my first essay in history, which I have carried to its end with many misgivings, but with much delight in the matter itself.

The orthodox may be affronted at two brief incursions into fiction which they will find in it. Let them skip these judiciously, magisterially. For my own part, I needed consolation at times for certain hard and bitter facts of the history. Therefore, since the way was sometimes long, and the wind, in my imagination, very cold—as it whistled in and out of the ruins of those manors and castles where the Scots Queen and her married gaolers dwelt, or as it drove the snow across the splendid grey façade of Hardwick (to say nothing of the draughts of the sombre, public research libraries)—I first drew my Countess down from her picture-frame to marshal her household, and then lured her child and her child's lover after her to gladden your road and mine.

And so I give you—besides all the thoughts which have gone to every scrap of writing I have ever done—these last, which curl and stiffen and again uncoil themselves about this hungry woman of Elizabethan

days. Into her life and much-abused toil, we, who have neither gold nor heirs for whom to store it, can look together in love and pity.

Thus even while we rejoice over our diminutive home, may we never forget to give thanks to the spirit of those who built the great houses which nourish the little ones, and who, in place of the "scarlet blossom of pain" that grows at great door and little, shall give to us in the end the perfect English rose.

M. S. R.

LITTLE ORCHARD,
STREATLEY,
BERKS.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

ALL complete letters herein quoted have been put into modern spelling. These, with the exception of one or two fragments and when the source is not otherwise indicated, have been selected from the transcripts in Lodge's *Illustrations of British History*, from the originals amongst the Talbot, Howard, and Cecil MSS.


The Author gratefully acknowledges the special permission of his Grace the Duke of Devonshire to include in this work reproductions of many of the fine pictures at Hardwick Hall, as well as a number of views of that noble building.

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BESS OF HARDWICK

AND HER CIRCLE

CHAPTER I

THE RED-HAIRED GIRL

AMONG the hills and dales of Derbyshire, that great county of august estates, there came into the world in the year 1520 a certain baby girl. Her father, John Hardwick of Hardwick House, and her mother Elizabeth, daughter of Thomas Leake of Hasland, in the same county, christened the child Elizabeth, naturally enough after her mother. Like the great Queen of England to whom she was senior, and with whom in after years she had so much traffic of a highly dramatic kind, this Elizabeth has come down to posterity under the shorter name of Bess.

Derbyshire, always a great county, was specially important in her day. Far from London and Court it seemed like a little England within England. Its great families wove its life step by step, its varied landscape, its heights and dales rendered it an important strategical centre in the event of rebellion, and the roughness and slough of pack-road and cart-road made even local expeditions affairs of moment. The little red-haired baby girl inherited from her native soil, from her race, and

from the neighbours about her all that sense of county importance, that desire to found, establish and endow a great family with great estates which her life developed to so remarkable a degree. That consciousness of county importance was inevitable in those days when families gave their names not only to their mansions, but to the hamlets or village which clustered round them. Bess of Hardwick was brought up amongst them all—the Hardwicks of Hardwick, the Barleys of Barley (or Barlow), the Pinchbecks of Pinchbeck, the Blackwalls of Blackwall, the Leakes, and the Leches. Not all of them were so very opulent. The Hardwicks, though not rich, were of honourable standing as county gentry, and the Barleys and Leakes were of the same social rank. John Hardwick could not afford to give his daughters large dowries, and consequently when my Lady Zouche, her aunt, took Bess into her household in London the parents were probably glad enough to embrace such a social chance for her. Up to this time she led naturally the life of the ordinary young gentlewoman of tender years, said her prayers, learnt to sew and embroider, and had seen something of the ordering of a household and the disposal of country produce, while she heard and treasured up such scraps of news as filtered through to her family and neighbours by letters and travellers who came to the houses about her, or such rumours as were bruited in the county town. She was but twelve years old when she made her entry at once into my Lady Zouche's house and into history. We are told that she had reddish hair and small eyes, but no picture of her remains to give any idea of her appearance at this moment when she left her childhood behind her. Physique she must always have had, and with it tenacity and tact in



Photo by Richard Keene, Ltd., Derby

HARDWICK OLD HALL

furthering her own prospects. She was of the type in which the art of "getting on" is innate. London and my Lady Zouche's excellent social position gave her her first chance.

There is almost a touch of Becky Sharp in the way that this young girl, dowerless save for the forty marks of *dot* allotted by John Hardwick to each of his daughters, settled down in that household. There came to London one of her Derbyshire neighbours—a youth of the Barley or Barlow family, named Robert. Under Lady Zouche's roof he fell sick and the little niece helped to tend him. Whether he also fell in love, whether Mistress Hardwick the mother was minded to "settle" one at least of her girls early, or whether Lady Zouche was of a strong match-making tendency does not appear. But a marriage between the niece and the guest was arranged and quickly carried through. A strange pitiful affair it must have been—that London wedding between the red-haired child and the sickly young man—a ceremony trailing after it a sorry hope of happiness in the midst of physicking and nostrums, weakness and watching, until the death of the bridegroom before the bride had reached her fourteenth year. His death left no apparent gap in my Lady Zouche's household and no mark upon history. But it bestowed on the child-wife the dignity of widowhood, and such importance, plus her forty marks, as attached to any property that Robert Barlow left her. The Barlows were not wealthy. Some of them in after years were in sore straits for a living. The State Papers show the existence of piteous letters from a certain Jane Barlow who writes in January, 1583, to her father, Alexander Barlow, "from a foreign land." She is in extreme want, forced to

borrow money to carry on her "business," and assures him that the meanest servant he has "liveth in far better condition than she." There is nothing to show that the Barlows applied to their relation "Bess" in after years for help. Such property as there was passed to her, and she travelled out of their ken into richer circles.

In 1547, at the age of twenty-seven, a woman in the height of her powers and the perfection of her womanhood, with considerable knowledge of the world and a tremendous store of physical and mental vitality, she secured a second husband and a man of considerable means—Sir William Cavendish. He was the second son of Thomas Cavendish, and his family, like that of Bess, took its name from its hamlet or manor. Says the pompous Bishop Kennet of those days: "The Cavendishes, like other great Families of greatest Antiquity derived a Name from their Place of Habitation. A younger branch of the Germons, famous in Norfolk and Essex, settled at Cavendish in Suffolk, and from that Seat and Estate were soon distinguished by that Sirname." Thomas Cavendish, like the father of Bess, was "a well-to-do but undistinguished Squire," but his sons made names for themselves.

In 1539 his son William was appointed one of the auditors of the Court of Augmentation. This Court, of which one at least of the members had been employed as a commissioner for the surrender of religious houses, was ostensibly founded to ensure the increase of the royal exchequer to such a point as would enable the sovereign duly to establish and strengthen the defences of the realm. Within a year Mr. Cavendish had so well played his cards and acquitted himself that



*From a photo by Richard Keene, Ltd., Derby, after the painting at Hardwick Hall
By permission of his Grace the Duke of Devonshire*

SIR WILLIAM CAVENDISH

he received from Henry VIII a grant of Church property—the lordships and manors of Northawe, Cuffley, and Childewicke in Hertfordshire. In 1548, the year after his marriage, he was further rewarded not only by the post of “Treasurer of the Chamber to the King” which, we are assured, was “a place of great trust and honour,” but the knighthood which brought his third wife the title that raised her above the majority of her fellow-gentlewomen. He did not bring her a virgin heart, for he had been twice married and twice a widower without male heir. But he conferred on her important social position, a great deal of land—additional prizes fell to his share in the way of lesser glebe properties, abbeys, and rectories, because his appointment in the royal exchequer kept him *au courant* of the places which were being given or going cheap in the market—and she in her turn brought him the sons he doubtless so greatly desired.

Never surely did a couple settle down so wholeheartedly or so harmoniously to the founding of a family, to the increase and consolidation of their patrimony. As to the first—their offspring—Sir William made a proud and careful list in writing, being, as Collins¹ says, “A learned and exact Person.” He had in all sixteen children, eight of whom were borne to him by “this beautiful and discreet Lady,” as Collins describes Bess Cavendish.

The fact that his second wife’s name was also Elizabeth has at times given rise to misstatements with regard to the place and date of his third marriage, but he was careful to record this: “I was married to Elizabeth Hardwick, my third wife, in Leicestershire,

¹ Collins’ *Noble Families*.

at Brodgate, my Lord Marquess's¹ House, the 20th of August, in the first yeare of King Ed. the 6, at 2 of the Clock after midnight."

Of the eight children of this marriage six survived. The others were Temperance, "my 10 childe and the second by the same woman," and Lucrece the youngest. The surviving daughters were Frances Cavendish, the eldest, married to Sir Henry Pierrepont, of Holme Pierrepont, Notts; Elizabeth Cavendish, who espoused Charles Stuart, Earl of Lennox; and Mary, the youngest girl, who became the wife of Gilbert Talbot. Of the three sons, the eldest, Henry Cavendish, who settled later at Tutbury Castle, married Lady Grace Talbot; William Cavendish, who wedded successively Anne, daughter of Henry Kighley, of Kighley, and Elizabeth, daughter of Sir Edward Boughton, and to whom his adoring mother left Chatsworth; and Charles. Frances Cavendish by her marriage became the ancestress of the Earls and Dukes of Kingston, and (through a female heiress) of the Earls Manvers, inheritors of the Pierrepont property. Her brother Henry, though he died young, was the ancestor of the Barons Waterpark; while William, duly knighted in time, was the first Earl of Devonshire and progenitor of that great ducal house. Mary, though her husband was but a younger son of the Talbot race, became eventually Countess of Shrewsbury on his unexpected accession to the title; while Charles, besides a knighthood, secured as bride one of the twin heiresses of the Barony of Ogle, by which means the possessions of Welbeck Abbey and other great estates were insured to the Cavendishes. All these matters,

¹ The Marquis of Dorset.



Photo by Richard Keene, Ltd., Derby

HARDWICK OLD HALL: THE GIANTS, CHAMBER

(So called from the two colossal figures, dubbed Gog and Magog, in raised plaster-work over the fireplace)

however, belong to the future. The present was all-important to the welfare of Sir William and his lady. A fast growing family must be provided for, and scattered estates meant waste of cost and labour. The clear, keen eyes of the newly-wedded Bess looked far into the future. She did not care for the notion of separation from her own lands and the unwieldy business of dealing with her husband's estates in different parts of the South of England. At the time of their marriage he had sold the aforesaid manors in Hertfordshire, Lincolnshire, Cardigan, and Cornwall, in favour of others in Derbyshire, Nottingham, and Stafford. The county instinct of his wife asserted itself. Her heart was in Derbyshire where her own dowry was concentrated. She desired the transfer of her bridegroom's interests and property thither. Her resolution and her vitality naturally carried the day, and Sir William sold all the rest of his southern estates and settled with her in a manor which had originally been built by her old county friends the Leeches (or Leches) of Leech—Chatsworth.

Gradually her great hobby asserted itself—the desire to build—and this constructive energy, as her story will show, went hand in hand with her master passion, the love of power and possession, to the end of her days. The mansion of the Leeches did not please her. It must be rebuilt for the glory of the Cavendishes. Her knight yielded to the wish. They set about the work quickly, living meanwhile, one supposes, in the original mansion. Hardwick Hall, it will be remembered, was not yet hers. John Hardwick, her father, had passed away in the nineteenth year of Henry VIII. That reign was at an end, and the reign of Edward VI

drawing to its close. Hardwick House eventually became the portion of the red-haired daughter, some say through the will of her brother, who apparently died without heir. But for the moment the Cavendishes needed a fine house for domesticity on a large scale and old Chatsworth did not suffice them. Elizabeth Cavendish had plenty to do in founding her family. These were great and busy times for the great lady. Shoulder to shoulder husband and wife worked at their building, at their estate, at the management of their tenants, their parks and palings, their farms and holdings. The red-haired girl was in her element as matron and controller and lady bountiful. Fortune smiled on her enterprise, and when the crown of Edward VI descended to Mary of England, Sir William Cavendish still held securely his valuable post in the Exchequer.

It is a fine English picture as one looks upon it, this married life of the Cavendishes—knight and lady amongst their babies, enlarging their county circle, increasing their county honours, holding intercourse with Court and capital, with market and county town.

Here is a letter on domestic matters from Sir William to his lady showing his trust in her management of their joint affairs :—

“To Bess Cavendish,

“My Wife.

“Good Bess, having forgotten to write in my letters that you should pay Otewelle Alayne eight pounds for certain oats that we have bought of him over and above twelve that I have paid to him in hand, I heartily pray you for that he is desirous to receive the rest at London to pay him upon the sight hereof. You know

my store and therefore I have appointed him to have it at your hands. And thus fare you well. From Chatsworth the XIIIth of April. W. C."

And here is a characteristic letter from his good lady during her absence from home in 1552 to her man of affairs, in which she soundly takes him to task for discourtesy to her "sister Jane," orders beer to be brewed against her own return, and issues commands for building and repairs :—

"Francis, I have spoken with your master for the deals or boards that you wrote to me of; and he is content that you shall take some for your necessity by the appointment of Neusante, so that you take such as will do him no service about his building at Chatsworth. I pray you look well to all things at Chatsworth till my aunt's coming home, which I hope shall be shortly, and in the meantime cause Broushawe to look to the smithy and all other things at Penteridge. Let the weaver make beer for me forthwith, for my own drinking and your master's; and see that I have good store of it, for if I lack either good beer or good charcoal or wood I will blame nobody so much as I will do you. Cause the floor in my bedchamber to be made even, either with plaster, clay, or lime: and all the windows where the glass is broken to be mended: and all the chambers to be made as close and warm as you can. I hear that my sister Jane cannot have things that is needful for her to have amongst you: If it be true, you lack a great of honesty as well as discretion to deny her anything that she hath a mind to, being in my house; and then assure yourself I cannot like it to have my sister so used. Like as I would not have any

superfluity or waste of anything, so likewise would I have her to have that which is needful and necessary. At my coming home I shall know more, and then I will think as I shall have cause. I would have you give to my midwife from me, and from my boy Willie and to my nurse from me and my boy, as hereafter followeth : first to the midwife from me ten shillings, and from Willie five shillings : to the nurse from me five shillings, and from my boy three shillings and four pence : so that in the whole you must give to them twenty-three shillings and four pence. Make my sister privy to it, and then pay it to them forthwith. If you have no other money, take so much of the rent at Penteridge. Tell my sister Jane that I will give my daughter something at my coming home : and praying you not to fail to see all things done accordingly, I bid you farewell. From London the 14th of November.

“Your Mistress,

“ELIZABETH CAVENDISH.

“Tell James Crompe that I have received the five pounds and nine shillings that he sent me by Hugh Alsope.

“to my servant Francis Whitfield,
give this at Chatsworth.”

CHAPTER II

THE MISTRESS BUILDER

UPON this scene of household importance and intimate family life, making, if not for happiness in the fullest sense of the word, at any rate for prosperity and success, fell for a second time upon the married life of Bess Hardwick the great shadow. Sir William Cavendish, so accomplished in business, so doughty a husband, so excellent a host, died in 1557.

His wife made a note of the event in her own hand :—

“Memorandum, that Sir William Cavendish, Knight, my most dear and well beloved husband, departed this present life on Monday, being the 25th day of October, betwixt the hours of 8 and 9 of the same day at Night, in the year of our Lord God 1557, the dominical Letter then C. On whose soul I most humbly beseech the Lord to have mercy, and to rid me and his poor children out of our great misery.

“ELIZABETH CAVENDISH.”

This was probably the greatest grief of her life, and all her after energies were spent in furthering the welfare of her Cavendish children.

Now followed a period of widowhood, during which no substantial or interesting episodes bring the lady's name to the front. But she did not lose her hold over society and the Court. Nor did she lay aside her wise,

worldly habits. She was still the grand dame—dispenser of charities, recipient of Court letters, mistress of masons and woodmen and grooms, resting securely upon her hoard like the dragon in German legend, assuring herself and the world, “I lie and possess, and would slumber.” But hers was not the nature to be quiescent very long. And she had incentive enough to action. She had six children to further in the world. Daughters must be married, sons must be brought into the charmed circle of the Queen, to run the gauntlet of suspicions, favours, and coldnesses from her and bear the jealousy and competition of others till the right opportunity came for advancement. Moreover, there was Chatsworth to complete—alone. At thirty-seven, gifted with excellent good looks, an indomitable will, and a constitution robust and healthy, it was not the moment for such a woman to permit either her schemes or her zest in life to collapse. So she keeps to her road, moving no doubt daily between the old Chatsworth and the new, the beloved fabric which for her was at once the mausoleum of her greatest happiness, the eloquent witness of her aspirations for her children, and a lasting memorial of her Cavendish ambitions. So one beholds her working onward, building for the future, impatient no doubt of the present. Fully accustomed now to take command of her life and affairs, she controls every item of the building of her new house. One can picture her easily enough walking or driving to and fro, while she issues commands for the felling of wood, signs orders for the selling of coals and stone, for the transplantation of trees, the manufacture of hangings, the transport of Derbyshire marbles, the employment of artificers in

mosaic, and plaster and wood. She had built six Cavendishes, bone of her bone, flesh of her flesh, and now she was building a great and perfect house for them and theirs. In it she would reign, so long as she lived, supreme. One pictures her again and again—a vigorous, vital woman, in proper and dignified weeds, with shrewd and genial face in which the lines of intrigue and sorrow had not yet deepened, moving amongst her army of workmen, fully conscious of the country life about her, though possibly not playing for a while a very active part in it. But the old zest of living, the old desire of the world, the joys of which she had tasted only at brief intervals during the babyhood of her six children, were ineradicable. She had acres and gold, she needed a helpmeet more than many women. No country gentleman of sufficient importance presented himself for whom she would think it worth while to give up the pretty delight of being addressed as “my lady.” In this dilemma Fate brought her face to face with Sir William St. Lo.

He was of excellent birth, and, like her second husband, a widower. His family was, of course, originally Norman. State papers show that a Margaret de St. Low or Laudo parted with certain rights in Cornish property in the reign of Henry III. By the seventeenth century the family seems to have concentrated in Gloucestershire, where it held the manor of Tormarton, twenty-two miles south of the county town. “Livery” of this manor, we read, was granted to William St. Loe by Elizabeth.

William and his brother John had fought bravely in Ireland against Desmond. In 1536 the former—the family name is spelt variously as Seyntlow, Seyntloe,

and Santclo—is mentioned in despatches. There is a vivid glimpse in various letters of an attack on the castle of “Carreke Ogunell.”¹ Says Lord Leonard Grey, writing to Henry VIII in England, “It was taken by assault by William Seyntloe and his men before scaling ladders could arrive.” But the writer is not quite sure if the success was due to “hope of fame or lack of victuals, for a halfpenny loaf was worth 12d., but there was none to be sold.” The castle has marble walls thirteen feet thick. It is the strongest Lord Leonard has ever seen. An Englishman could take it at a rush, in spite of the fact that besides being set in a fine moat, “in an island of fresh water,” the place was guarded with watch towers of hewn marble. But Lord Leonard does not think that any Irishman could have built it!

Later there is mutiny and rumour of sore disruption in the English-Irish army. Young Captain St. Loe’s men forgather with discontented spirits, and the whole of his stalwart retinue of three hundred, “men of high courage and activity,” revolts so badly that, though he and his captains are cleared of all blame, it is necessary to “bend the ordnance” on the mutineers and proceed against them in “battle array.” Little wonder that the men, henchmen and yeomen, doubtless, of Gloucestershire, hated the campaign. Even Lord Leonard himself shared the destitution of the privates and was pinched for the lack of a loaf. “And so,” he goes on after his comment on the price of bread, “I among others lay in my harness, without any bed, almost famished with hunger, wet, and cold.”

Fortune and personality carried William St. Loe onward. In the forties of the sixteenth century he appears

¹ State MS.

as seneschal of Waterford, and complains bitterly of the way in which he is hampered in office by the Lord Chancellor in Ireland. The contention of his official companions, however, as given in a letter to the Court, describes him as "a good warrior, but unfit to administer justice." Military disorder is stated to be the result, and if the complainants only "had the disposal of the farms Seyntlow now has" things would be very different. It is suggested that he is turning into a regular free-booter. . . . And so on.

However this may be, we find the gentleman in 1557 not only safely established in England, but holding important Court posts with high-sounding titles. He is at once Grand Butler of England and captain of the Queen's Guard. In these capacities Bess Hardwick, as Lady Cavendish, must have already met him. Had she not married him and had he lived long enough, she might have been committed to his tender mercies and guardianship in a very different sense. But at present her genius for intrigue only threw her into the apparently pleasant fetters of marriage. This "Grand Botelier," this dashing swashbuckler who now rode at the head of the royal guards, and was in constant touch with the governor of the Tower, with the interior of which building she made acquaintance later, took her as his second wife. The whole thing seems to have been most amicable, affectionate, and excellent—amicable and affectionate on his part, excellent from her point of view. It did not interfere with his important duties ; it did not necessarily nail her to the Court. Above all, it did not interfere with her building. Indeed, it gave her the more heart to it because the good captain would now assume by her side the duties of Derbyshire host.

Moreover, he could help her materially in her building. She did not need his advice about architecture of course. But she saw that she could draw under her hand the dues of his manor in Gloucestershire for the glory of the Cavendishes and the surer foundation of her own comfort. The fine dashing soldier had children. Yet this was no serious block in her way. She might arrange it all, while leaving them not destitute but dependent on her wise financial dispositions. The marriage was duly solemnised and gave satisfaction. The Queen approved of my Lady St. Loe, and the more so because the latter did not wish to monopolise her bridegroom. There was enough at the Derbyshire estate to amuse her, and Sir William's letters to her kept her advised of things "about" the Queen's Majesty. Scottish affairs were brewing hotly. Elizabeth was but newly a queen. There were processions and enactments, enquiries, and excursions at Court. Bess Hardwick held the post of Lady of the Bedchamber, and naturally took the keenest interest in all that went on. Except through letters, reliable news did not filter at all to the wilds of the Peak and its lovely dales. But Sir William loved her and appreciated her deeply. In his affectionate letters he identifies her quaintly and sweetly with her house. "My honest, sweet Chatsworth" is one of the expressions. Elsewhere she is "My own, more dearer to me than I am to myself," and in another letter he has seized her enthusiasm for management and construction, for he calls her "My own good servant and chief overseer."

Occasionally Bess wanted her "grand botelier" to herself, and it must have been hard for Sir William to tear himself away from the rich security and ease of



*Photo by Richard Keene, Ltd., Derby, from the picture at Hardwick Hall
By permission of his Grace the Duke of Devonshire*

SIR WILLIAM ST. LOE

the house. One of his letters from Court shows that he is in trouble with his Queen for delayed return.

“She hath found great fault with my long absence, saying she would talk with me farther and that she would well chide me. Whereunto I answered, that when her highness understood the truth and the cause she would not be offended. Whereunto she says, ‘Very well, very well’; howbeit, hand of hers I did not kisse.”

A portrait which hangs in the great gallery at Hardwick shows the writer of the following letters (quoted in Hunter’s *Hallamshire*) in his habit as he lived—a kindly fellow, but at this period not a man of power.

Sir William Saint-Loe to Lady Saint-Loe.

“My own, more dearer to me than I am to myself, thou shalt understand that it is no small fear nor grief unto me of thy well doing that I should presently see what I do, not only for that my continual nightly dreams beside my absence hath troubled me, but also chiefly for that Hugh Alsope cannot satisfy me in what estate thou nor thine is, whom I regard more than I do William Seyntlo. Therefore I pray thee, as thou dost love me, let me shortly hear from thee, for the quieting of my unquieted mind, how thine own sweet self with all thine doeth; trusting shortly to be amongst you. All thy friends here saluteth thee. Harry Skipwith desired me to make thee and no other privy that he is sure of mistress Nell, with whom he is by this time. He hath sent ten thousand thanks unto thyself for the same: she hath opened all things unto him. To-morrow Sir Richard Sackville and I ride to London together; on Saturday next we return hither again. The queen yesterday, her

own self riding upon the way, craved my horse ; unto whom I gave him, receiving openly for the same many goodly words. Thus wishing myself with thyself, I bid thee, my own good servant and chief overseer of my works, most heartily farewell : by thine who is wholly and only thine, yea and for all thine while life lasteth. From Windsor the fourth of September by thy right worshipful master and most honest husband master Sir

“ WILLIAM SEYNTLO, esquire.

“ Commend me to my mother and to all my brothers and sisters, not forgetting Frank with the rest of my children and thine. The Amnar¹ saluteth thee and sayeth no gentleman's children in England shall be better welcome nor better looked unto than our boys. Once again, farewell good honest sweet.

“ Myself or Greyves shall be the next messenger.

“ To my own dear wife at
Chatsworth deliver this.”

Sir William Saint-Loe to Lady Saint Loe.

“ My hap is evil, my time worse spent ; for that my reward as yet is nothing more than fair words with the like promises. Take all in good part ; and if I should understand the contrary, it would trouble me more than my pen shall express. I have leave to come and wait upon thee, I and my brother Clement, with two or three good fellows more : [we] had been with thee by this day if it had not been for our —— matter, the which I will not leave over rawly. I will forbear the answering of all particularities in thy last letter written unto me, for that God willing I will this next week be the

¹ ? Almoner.

messenger myself. Master Man came home the night before the date hereof. He putteth me in great hope of the matter you know of. Thus trusting that God provideth for us all things for the best, I end ; committing thee and all thine which are mine unto his blessed will and ordinance. Farewell, my own sweet Bess. From Master Man's house in Redcross Street, the 12th of October, by him who dareth not so near his coming home to term thee as thou art : yet thine

“WILLIAM SENYTLO.

“My cousin Clarke saluteth thee, who was by me at the writing hereof.

“To my own good wife at
Chatsworth deliver this.”

In this letter he complains of the heavy charge for his hired Court apparel.

Sir William Saint-Loe to Lady Saint-Loe.

“My honest sweet Chatsworth : I like the weekly price of my hired court stuff so evil that upon Thursday next I will send it home again, at which day the week endeth. I pray you cause such stuff as Mowsall left packed in a sheet to be brought hither by the next carrier : there be hand towels and other things therein that I must occupy when I shall lie at Whitehall. My men hath neither shirt nor any other thing to shift them until that come. Trust none of your men to ride any [of] your housed horses, but only James Crompt or William Marchington ; but neither of them without good cause serve speedily to be done. For nags there be enough about the house to serve other purposes. One handful of oats to every one of the geldings at a

watering will be sufficient so they be not laboured. You must cause some[one] to oversee the horsekeeper for that he is very well learned in loitering.

“The Queen hath found great fault with my long absence saying that she would talk with me farther, and that she would well chide me. Whereunto I answered that when her highness understood the truth and the cause she would not be offended. Whereunto she said ‘Very well, very well.’ Howbeit hand of hers I did not kisse.

“The Lord Keeper hath promised me faithfully to be at both days’ hearing ; and that if either law or conscience be on my side I shall have it to my contentment. Vaughan is come unto town, but not yet Bagott. Stevens and we shall go through on Friday night next, at which time his brother will be here, who hath disbursed seven hundred of the twelve hundred pounds. I have an extreme pain in my teeth since Sunday dinner. Thus with aching teeth I end, praying the living [God] to preserve thee and all thine. Written at London, against my will where I am if other ways our matters might well be ended, this 24th of October :

“Your loving husband with aching heart until we meet,
“WILLIAM SEYNTLO.

“If you think good, lease your fishing in Dove unto Agard. We are the losers of suffering it as we have done.

“To my loving wife at Chatsworth
give this with speed.”

This next letter is from Sir George Pierrepont in gratitude of her kindly offices. His family was afterwards closely connected with that of Bess of Hardwick, for her eldest daughter married Sir Henry Pierrepont.

Sir George Pierrepoint to Lady Saint-Loe.

“Right worshipful and very good Lady : after my heartiest manner I commend me to your Ladyship : even so pray you I may be to good Mr. Seyntloe : most heartily thanking you both for your great pains taken with me at Holme, accepting everything (though it were never so rudely handled) in such gentle way as you did ; which doth and will cause me to love you the better while I live if I were able to do you other pleasure or service ; and the rather because I understand your Ladyship hath not forgotten my suit to you at your going away as specially to make Mr. Sackville and Mr. Attorney my friends in the matter between Mr. Whalley and me, wherein he doeth me plain wrong (as I take it is my conscience) only to reap trouble and unquiet me. But I trust so much in God’s help, and partly by your Ladyship’s good means, and continuance of your goodness towards me, that he shall not overthrow me in my righteous cause. And touching such communication as was between us as at Holme, if your Ladyship and the gentlewoman your daughter like or be upon sight as well as I and my wife like the young gentlewoman, I will not shrink from it I said or promised ; by the grace of God who preserve your Ladyship and my Master your husband long together in wealth, health and prosperity to his pleasure, and your gentle heart’s desire. From my poor house at Woodhouse the 4th of November 1561, by the rude lusty hands of your good Ladyship’s assuredly always to command.

“GEORGE PIERREPOINT.

“To the right worshipful and my
singular good Lady, my Lady
Sentloo at London this be delivered.”

This other letter is highly typical for the good lady's literary style and her attitude towards her employees. It is to James Crompe, her man of affairs.

"Crompe, I do understand by your letters that Wortly saith he will depart at our Ladyday next. I will that you shall have him bound in an obligation to avoid¹ at the same day, for sure I will trust no more to his promise. And when he doth tell you that he is any penny behind for work done to Mr. Cavendish or me, he doth lie like a false knave : for I am most sure he did never make anything for me but two vanes to stand upon the house. I do very well like your sending sawyers to Pentrege and Medoplecke, for that will further my works : and so I pray you in any other thing that will be a help to my building, let it be done. And for Thomas Mason, if you can hear where he is, I would very gladly he were at Chatsworth. I will let you know by my next letter what work Thomas Mason shall begin at first, when he doth come. And as for the other mason which Sir James told you of, if he will not apply his work, you know that he is not the man for me ; and the mason's work which I have to do is not much, and Thomas Mason will very well oversee that work. I perceive Sir James is much misliked for his religion ; but I think his wisdom is such that he will make small account of that matter. I would have you tell my aunt Lenecker that I would have the little garden which is by the new house made a garden this year. I care not whether she bestow any great cost thereof ; but to sow it with all kinds of herbs and flowers and some pieces of it with mallows. I have sent you by this carrier three

¹ Avoid = clear out.

bundles of garden seeds all written with William Marchington's hand ; and by the next you shall know how to use them in every point.

“ From the Court the 8th of March,

“ Your mistress,

“ E. SEYNTLO.”

The “ Aunt Lenecker ” (more correctly known as Lynacre) was a Leake and sister of Lady St. Loe's mother. She seems to have lived for some years with her niece, possibly since her first widowhood.

Nothing very exciting happened to the St. Loe couple in their short married life. When not at Court they paid visits, were entertained, or entertained their own vistsors, as scraps of correspondence show. They must have had traffic already with the great family of Talbot—which, besides Sheffield Castle, owned so many large seats in Derby and Nottingham—and both of them naturally held intercourse with “ Mr. Secretary Walsingham ” and “ Mr. Treasurer Cecil.”

When Sir William St. Loe died—tolerably soon, alas !—Bess Hardwick had gone far with her building, social and actual. Her third widowhood found her richer, bolder, better known at Court, and able to play her part in an ever-widening circle of the powerful and prosperous.

Such a lady would naturally make enemies. In 1567 she was slandered by Henry Jackson, an ex-scholar of Merton College, Oxford, the tutor of her children. Instantly the matter went to the Council, and the Council wrote in September to the Archbishop of Canterbury. “ Lady St. Loo, widow, having retained as schoolmaster Henry Jackson . . . is disturbed by scandalous reports raised against her family by him ;

you are to examine the matter thoroughly and speedily with the assistance of the Solicitor-General Mr. Oseley and Mr. Peter Osborne or other Ecclesiastical Commissioners, that the lady's good name may be preserved ; if he has unjustly defamed her he is to be severely punished," runs the digest of the draft in the State MS. And immediately upon the conclusion of the examination the Queen herself intervenes on behalf of the lady "who has long served with credit in our Court," and forthwith she commands the punishment of the wicked clerk : "extreme punishment, corporal or otherwise, openly or private, and that speedily."

Besides the danger of slander there was the trap of intrigue. Up to the present Bess Hardwick had kept clear of mischief, but, native curiosity apart, she could not, as Lady of the Bedchamber, help being often the recipient of the secrets of her friends. The romantic love story of Lady Catherine Grey, who held a similar Court post to herself, brought her into a tight place. For the benefit of those who do not recall the tale it shall be set forth again here.

The Lady Catherine was the sister of Lady Jane Grey. By a curious combination of circumstances—the exclusion given by the will of Henry VIII to the posterity of Margaret of Scotland, the publication of the will of Edward VI, and the non-repeal of certain Acts of Parliament—it was judged that the right to the crown rested with the House of Suffolk. To this great house Lady Catherine was the heir. She was formally contracted in extreme youth to Lord Herbert, the son of the Earl of Pembroke. But the wise Earl, in dread of the acute complications which such a marriage might entail, arranged for a divorce. This probably affected

the lady but little. She was young, she was attractive and romantic, she could meet cavaliers enough and to spare in the immediate circle of the Queen. But, as all the world knows, her Majesty, while she kept a dozen men languishing about her, was very loth to have any of her ladies wed. Love affairs must be very secret, lest the parties incurred her disfavour and the loss of benefits. As for Lady Catherine, her birth, as has been shown, rendered her a mark for all manner of suspicion. At Court she was the close companion of Lady Jane Seymour, daughter of the Duke of Somerset. This Lady Jane had a brother, no less than the Earl of Hertford. What more inevitable than a love affair between him and Catherine? There were sorrows enough in the background of her history, slavery enough—despite pageant and hunting and the comings and goings of great persons from foreign courts—to endure at the hands of the energetic, alert, excitable, witty, jealous royal mistress. Little by little the love story wove itself in the manner of every love tale. A community of interest, a series of assemblies which passed in array her Majesty's ladies before the eyes of her gentlemen, little incidents which brought out the personalities of the two, mere propinquity, a look here and a word there, did their work. The two were soon secretly plighted, with the Lady Jane to share and shield their dear secret. Many anxious moments must have gone to their councils. To declare their troth would only be a signal for their instant separation. The same result would arise if they humbly asked the royal permission to be betrothed. To marry and fly would only savour of deep State conspiracy. To marry and bide quietly and then face the astonished and scandalous world with an

air of "Indeed, and it is true. So part us you shall not. And, moreover, 'tis our affair. Wherefore, fling your mud elsewhere!" seemed the wisest way in the end, and also followed the line of least resistance.

One morning—surely as crisp and heartening a day as could be desired for such a purpose—the Queen's Majesty went to Eltham in Kent to hunt. My Lady Jane and my Lady Catherine stayed behind. When all was quiet they left the Palace (Westminster) "by the stairs at the orchard" and strolled quietly "along the sands." Those sands led to the Earl of Hertford's house in "Chanon Row." He was waiting for his lady; he did not even leave her to call the priest. That was the Lady Jane's errand. There is something very delightful about this incident, and the steady chaperon's part undertaken by the Earl's sister. The priest came, the wedding took place. After the brief ceremony there could not be much dalliance or entertainment. It was not yet the time to give the secret to the world. The ladies must reach the Palace again before hue and cry could be raised. They did not go back by "the sands," probably because the tide had risen. They went back by boat. The Earl did not accompany them. But he led his bride and his sister to the boat which waited for them at the foot of the water-stairs of his house. He assisted them in—it must have been very hard to let go the hand of the woman so newly pledged to him—and the shallop went quietly on its way and delivered its fair passengers at the Palace stairs without exciting comment. A little later the two ladies were demurely seated at dinner "in Master Comptroller's chamber." Probably neither of them played that evening much of a table part.

The bride was left to bear the onus of the affair. After a few stolen meetings the Earl went to France. And presently the world began to point and stare. The report grew, but no one seemed able to credit it. At the close of August, 1561, the Earl's mother wrote to Cecil mentioning the rumour, denying all knowledge of it, and hoped that the wilfulness of her unruly child, Hertford, would not diminish the Queen's favour. On the same date Sir Edward Warner, Lieutenant of the Tower, wrote to the Queen stating that he had questioned Lady Catherine as to her "love practices," but she would confess nothing. It is said that Lady St. Loe burst into tears when Lady Catherine made confession to her. Probably the older woman knew what was in store for them both. The royal warrant to Sir Edward Warner not only required him to "examine the Lady Catherine very straightly how many hath been privy to love between her and the Lord of Hertford from the beginning," but continues: "Ye shall also send to Alderman Lodge, secretly, for St. Low and shall put her in awe of divers matters confessed by the Lady Catherine; and so also deal with her that she may confess to you all her knowledge in the same matters. It is certain that there hath been great practices and purposes; and since the death of the Lady Jane¹ she hath been most privy. And as ye shall see occasion, so ye may keep St. Low two or three nights, more or less, and let her be returned to Lodge's or kept still with you, as ye shall think meet."

After poor Lady Catherine took Lady Loe into her confidence, she made frantic application for help to Lord Robert Dudley—not yet Earl of Leicester—so

¹ Lady Jane Grey.

high in the Queen's good graces. In this there is sheer drama as well as pathos—this confession and piteous appeal from the young and comely lady of quality, whose only fault was that she had married for love, to the handsome, pampered, arrogant cavalier, the Queen's darling. Lady Hertford went to his very chamber in Court to implore him to stand between her parlous state as prospective mother and the Queen's anger. Yet nothing in such contingencies could divert Elizabeth's fury, or make her act in a humane fashion. Lord Hertford was summoned to England to undergo trial with his wife, and very soon both were committed separately to the Tower. But before this could be done the farce of a public enquiry had to be played. A commission was ordained, pompously headed by no less a person than Archbishop Parker. The accused were requested to produce, within a given time, witnesses of their marriage. That they failed to do this is extraordinary. The priest seems to have disappeared, and Lady Jane Seymour appeared unable to find him or to assist in furnishing the required evidence. But as this couple could not satisfy the Commission in time they were sentenced to be imprisoned during the Queen's pleasure. "Displeasure" would be the correct word. For Elizabeth knew little but vanity and vexation of spirit at this period. The very word marriage must have been a red rag to her. With the strong vitality and virility of her father warring within her against the heritage of the feminine instincts of her mother, Anne Boleyn, with countless suitors and innumerable flatterers to encourage and keep at bay alternately, with one eye fixed on Mary of Scotland and another on the "devildoms of Spain," her life just now

was a constant turmoil. Her whole entourage was forced to share in it. She would not decide upon a consort to help her ; she belittled the estate of marriage one day and dallied with it the next. No wonder that poor Mr. Treasurer Cecil wrote as he did on the eve of the New Year of 1564. Schemes matrimonial whirled round him like the winter snow. Elizabeth was being wooed by a French monarch and an Austrian Emperor at the same moment ; the Lennox family and Mary of Scotland were working to achieve the marriage of the latter with Darnley, and the Lady Mary Grey, fired no doubt by her sister's intrigue and sick of loneliness, had actually surreptitiously married John Keys, the Serjeant Porter to the Queen. Meanwhile the Earl and Countess of Hertford were in the Tower. In addition, the Queen was putting up her beloved Dudley, now Earl of Leicester, to oppose Darnley as a possible consort for Scottish Mary. Shrewd old Cecil shows, however, that she is only half-hearted about it : "I see the qn M^{ty} very desyroos to have my L. of Leicester placed in this high degree to be the Scottish Queen's husband, but whan it commeth to the conditions which are demanded I see her then remiss of her earnestness."¹

He concludes wearily enough :—

"This also I see in the Qn Ma^{ty}, a sufficient contentation to be moved to marry abroad, and if it is so may [it] please Almighty God, to leade by the hand some mete person to come and lay hand on her to her contentation, I cold than wish my self more helth to endure my yeres somewhat longar to enjoye such a world here as I trust

¹ State MS.



would follow : otherwise I assure yow, as now thyngs hang in desperation, I have no comfort to lyve."

My Lady St. Loe, as confidante, was forced to weather the storm and endure reprimand. The married lovers, meanwhile, dragged out their days in durance. Their son was born in the Tower. In vain they languished, pined, and implored the intercession of friends. In 1562 the Earl was allowed a little more ease. Husband and wife managed to meet again. Another child was born to them, and my Lord was duly fined fifteen thousand pounds by the Star Chamber, for this event was construed into a new State offence. In 1563 the dreaded plague caused Elizabeth to remove her poor love-birds from the Tower. Lady Catherine went to the house of her uncle, Sir John Grey, in Essex, and he was roused to uttermost compassion and distress by her wretched mental and physical condition. It was in mid-Lent that he wrote to Cecil emphatically and ironically:—

"It is a great while me thinkethe, Cousin Cecile, since I sent unto you, in my neices behalf, albeit I knowe, (opportunitie so servinge) you are not unmindful of her miserable and comfortlesse estate. For who wantinge the Princes favor, maye compt himselfe to live in any Realme? And because this time of all others hath ben compted a time of mercie and forgiveness I cannot but recomende her woefull liffe unto you. In faith I wolde I were the Queen's confessor this Lent, that I might joine her in penance to forgive and forget; or otherwise able to steppe into the pulpett to tell her Highness, that God will not forgive her, unleast she frelye forgeve all the worlde."

This letter is worth quoting because it shows the prevailing attitude of the Elizabethan courtier. No one who lacked the favour of the sovereign could be accounted as one living. Lady Catherine, once under that heavy cloud of disfavour, never emerged, but died broken and miserable within six years of her unhappy marriage. Wherefore Lady St. Loe had chance enough to learn her lesson, and was fortunate in that her share of the affair was visited only by a cross-examination and warning. She was not at all the sort of woman to brook being left out in the cold. She was too wise, of course, ever to have engulfed herself in a marriage of this sort, but in such a case, had she not managed to divert Elizabeth's anger by some master stroke of wit and diplomacy, she would certainly not have languished of "woofull grieffe" nor starved herself to death, like Lady Catherine, for sorrow.

At such a time and in face of the fresh hubbub caused at Court by the marriage of Lady Mary Grey ("an unhappy chance and monstuoos," comments Cecil, in a letter to the English Ambassador in France), the peace and security of Chatsworth offered themselves as a happy refuge against all complications. There is a grotesque humour in Cecil's use of that word monstrous, for Lady Mary was almost a dwarf, and Keys, whom Cecil calls "the biggest gentleman in this Court," had secured his post of Serjeant Porter owing to his magnificent size and height. He was twice Lady Mary's age, and was a widower with several children. The Queen clapped him in the Fleet, and condemned Lady Mary to confinement in the houses of successive friends. The pair never met after their hasty wedding.

Thus, on all sides, Court was a place of "dispeace," while in Derbyshire Lady St. Loe had good neighbours, people of quality and substance, and was safe within her parks and palings. She did not share her royal mistress's distrust of matrimony, for she was free to choose her next lord, and there was no reason why she should remain a widow longer than she could help.

It is not to be suggested for a moment that she had no suitors and that she was not the subject of all kinds of matrimonial gossip. One Fowler (subsequently committed to the Tower in connection with the discovery of suspicious papers) opines in his "notes" that "either Lord Darcy or Sir John Thynne are to marry my Lady St. Loe, and not Harry Cobham." Doubtless the Cobham match would have pleased her well, and she would have been quite in her element in the place which afforded a seat and a surname to that noble and splendid family upon whom the evil days of Jacobean confiscation and the betrayal of Sir Walter Raleigh had not yet fallen. A sister of Lord Cobham was married to Mr. Secretary Cecil, "and the match would have been advantageous, but possibly my Lady, with her deep insight into character, divined that the gentleman was not of the steady stuff which makes for worldly security." Moreover the best matches are by no means to be found near the Court, and close at hand, in the same county, lived one greater than the Cobhams, a man whom many a maid and every widow would be proud to espouse. He was a widower, an earl, the owner of seven seats, bearer of a high government post, and he came of a long line of distinguished soldiers. Lady St. Loe went to work wisely. She had

the assistance of her dear gossip and contemporary, Lady Cobham. No one could have acted the go-between more discreetly. Before long the fashionable world had something to talk about in the announcement of the fourth marriage of Bess Hardwick.

CHAPTER III

“A GREAT GENTLEMAN”

THE fourth husband of “Building Bess” was no less a person than George Talbot, sixth Earl of Shrewsbury. Though the name does not appear in the great roll of the prominent soldiers at the battle of Hastings, the first Talbot—then Talebot—of whom anything noteworthy is recorded, won the first title, a barony, for his family at the close of the career of William the First. Thenceforward the Talbots march magnificently through the history of England—great gentlemen, castellans, commanders, governors, judges, lords-lieutenant. They wielded authority in Wales, fought in France, Scotland, Ireland, Castile, occasionally fell under suspicion of conspiracy, and emerged without hurt. Once and once only was their pride humbled in the dust, when the hitherto invincible tactics of John Talbot, the greatest general of his day, the chief glory of all the Talbots before and since, were overcome by the generalship of the Maid of Orleans. It must have hit the great general very hard to find himself in prison on French soil for three long years at the hands of a woman. Neither force nor strategy freed him, but mere money. He had married a rich wife—heiress to all “Hallamshire,”¹ including the castle

¹ According to Leland, “Halamshire beginneth a ii. mile from Rotheram. Sheffield iii miles from Rotheram, wher the lord of

of Sheffield. In 1432 he agreed to pay a large ransom, and hurried back to England, bursting with purpose and revenge. Instantly he raised a fresh force, rejoined the English army in France, and fought with such terrible and triumphant results that his name, like that of Bonaparte, figured for generations as a bogey with which to scare fractious children. It was this tremendous campaign which won for his race the great earldom of Shrewsbury.

George, the sixth earl, the great gentleman now dealt with, inherited all the administrative qualities of his ancestors, though he was less intimately associated with war than his father Francis. It was well also that his duties should have been to a greater extent civil and defensive than military and aggressive. For he had stepped into a great inheritance, and his burdens, as householder and county magnate, were stupendous. The manors and castles of Worksop, Welbeck, Bolsover, Sheffield, Tutbury, Wingfield, and Rufford were all his. He came into his own in 1560. The greatest gift he received in that year was the Garter which the Queen bestowed on him. Five years later he was appointed Lord-Lieutenant of the counties of York, Nottingham, and Derby. Subsequently the post of High Steward in the place of the unhappy fifth Duke of Norfolk was

Shreusbyre's castle, the chefe market towne of Halamshire. And Halamshire goeth one way vi or vii miles above Sheffield by west, yet as I here say, another way the next village to Sheffield is in Derbyshire. Al Halamshire go to the scecions of York and is counted as a membre of Yorkshire. Aeglesfield and Bradfeld ii townelletes or villages long to one parochie chirche. So by this meanes (as I was enstructed) ther be but iii paroches in Halamshire that is of name, and a great Chapelle.”

Hunter sums up these three parishes as Sheffield, Ecclesfield, and Hansworth, with the chapelry of Bradfield.

added to his honours. In the third year of his lieutenancy the affair with Bess Hardwick was in full swing.

From both sides it was a reasonable and profitable alliance. He was a widower with sons and daughters who needed mothering. Her children needed a father. There was wealth enough to provide for all. Yet possibly family dissensions might arise amongst the young folk. But against this risk my lady had devised a splendid scheme of protection—the intermarriage of some of the children. They were but children, the two couples—Gilbert Talbot, the fifteen-year-old second son of the Lord-Lieutenant and Mary Cavendish, and the bride's son Henry Cavendish, to whom Grace Talbot, the Earl's daughter, was given as wife.

The aforesaid childish marriages were settled and carried through forthwith. Shortly afterwards the wedding of their elders took place with due magnificence, while the bride, besides her Cavendish and Barlow properties, brought to her fourth husband the Gloucestershire estate of St. Loe.

If the Cavendish epoch had been one of security and happiness, the Shrewsbury epoch promised to be one of sheer brilliance and delight. It is true there were one or two dissentient voices. Said a certain John Hall, under subsequent examination upon his arrest for Scottish conspiracy, that, though he served as a gentleman of the Earl's household for some years, he so disliked my Lord's marriage with this wife, as divers others of his friends did, that he resigned his post. Yet the Queen and her circle approved. That was the main thing. The following letter from a kinsman at Court emphasises the fact :—¹

¹ Hunter's *Hallamshire*.

"May it please you to understand that Mr. Wingfield hath delivered your venison to the Queen's Majesty with my lord's most humble commission, and your Ladyship with humble thanks from both your honours for her great goodness.

"[I] assure your Ladyship of my faith, her Majesty did talk one long hour with Mr. Wingfield of my Lord and you so carefully, that, as God is my judge, I think your honours have no friend living that could have more consideration, nor more show love and great affection. In the end she asked when my Lady meant to come to the Court : he answered he knew not : then said she, 'I am assured if she might have her own will she would not be long before she would see me.' Then said, 'I have been glad to see my Lady Saint-Loe, but now more desirous to see my Lady Shrewsbury.' 'I hope,' said she, 'my Lady hath known my good opinion of her ; and thus much I assure you, there is no Lady in this land that I better love and like.' Mr. Batleman can more at large declare unto your honour. And so with most humble commendations to my very good Lord, I wish to you both as the Queen's Majesty doth desire ; and so take my leave in humble wise. From St. John's the 21st of October.

"Your honours to command,

"E. WINGFIELD."

There was certainly nothing whatever in this marriage to upset Elizabeth's plans. Indeed, it really paved the way for her schemes and made it easier for her to utilise not only the Earl's wealth, his authority and position, but all his country seats in turn for the greater security of her life and throne.

My Lady Shrewsbury was forty-eight, my Lord had been but eight years an Earl. Time had not yet marked on his face the lines of anxiety and care which the next twenty-three years were to bring him. He was at the zenith of his career, and the Queen hinted mysteriously that ere long she would show him still more emphatic proofs of her trust and affection in so splendid a servitor. It is in a very happy and devoted vein that he writes love letters from Court just after marriage to his second bride, in which he addresses her as "sweet none."¹

It is regrettable that these letters to his "none" are not more numerous. Otherwise the Earl's correspondence all his life was enormous, and the masses of letters which mirror contemporary history and his duties in connection with them are nearly all comprised in that rich heritage of manuscript known as the Talbot Papers. Cecil is his constant correspondent. As Lord-Lieutenant of three such great counties he would naturally be kept *au courant* of great happenings. Is there fear of French invasion? Immediately the Lords of the Privy Council send him instructions. He is to organise companies of demi-lances, to find horses for them—"a good strong and well-set gelding and a man on his back meet to wear a corselet and shoot a dagge" runs the specification. Did her Majesty receive "letters out of Spain"? Copies of the same were sent to the Earl "to the intent that you may thereby see what the humour and disposition of those parties [i.e. the King of Spain and his emissary] tend unto." Did France goad Mary of Scotland into that unforgettable offence—the adoption of the English

¹ None = own. Probably an abbreviation of "mine own."



After a portrait at Rufford Abbey

GEORGE TALBOT, EARL OF SHREWSBURY



After a portrait in the possession of the Duke of Portland

ELIZABETH COUNTESS OF SHREWSBURY

royal arms? Then also must his lordship be acquainted with the fact and its immense possibilities. Presently active Scottish hostility seemed imminent, and the letter which travelled to my Lord from Berwick to bid him have all his men in readiness to move to the Border is cumbrously and theatrically endorsed "Haste, haste, haste, haste, post haste with all possible haste."

The marriage of Mary and Darnley, the exciting news of the force raised by the rebellious Earls of Moray and Arran against their Queen immediately after the ceremony, the perilous position of Mary betwixt her enemies—between Moray's force on one side, secretly encouraged by Elizabeth, and Elizabeth's forces, supplemented by two thousand Irish and the Earl of Argyle's company, on the other—the details of field-pieces and "harquebusses," all these events and matters passed in review under the eyes of the splendid and cautious Earl of Shrewsbury. Scarcely a day went by but some important paper or letter, official or private, was put into his hands. At every turn he was helping to "make history," while he was a keen spectator of the Scottish drama up to the point when Mary fled out of her own country to implore the aid and protection of her sister sovereign.

It is now that the plot—Elizabeth's plot which she had kept up her sleeve—begins to peep out. The first authentic news of it apparently went to the other Elizabeth, the newly made Countess of Shrewsbury, in the following letter from the English Court. The signature is torn off, but the correspondent has weighty news to tell, in spite of his deprecatory attitude towards mere rumours :—

“My most humble duty remembered unto your honourable good Ladyship. If it were not for my bounden duty’s sake I would be loth to write, because there is so small certainty in occurrences, but (seeing I am bound to write) it is but small that I see with my own eyes that is worth writing, and therefore I am forced to supply by that I do hear ; which I write as I hear by credible report, otherwise I should not write at all, and therefore if I do err it is pardonable. The news is here that my Lord your husband is sworn of the Privy Council ; and that the Scottish Queen is on her journey to Tutbury, something against her will, and will be under my Lord’s custody there.”

The rest of the letter is perhaps worth quoting, because it gives a picture of public events and suggests such a spacious background for the present life of Bess Hardwick. It deals with the war now beginning between Spain and the Netherlands, owing to the barbarous treatment of the latter by the Duke of Alva, and the commotion occasioned by it in France.

“The report is that the Duke of Alva hath for the lack of money disarmed the most part of his army ; and they are not paid for that is past ; but rob and steal, and much molest the country. And being divers garrisons at Maestricht of the Walloons the Duke sent to discharge them and sent Spaniards in their place, who have shut the gates of the Spaniards and refuse to deliver the town before they are paid their due. . . . In France there is a great stir to let the Prince of Conde to join with the Prince of Orange, so that the King divides his force, the Duke of Anjou to stop the passage of the Prince of Condé, etc., etc.”

The letter ends with intimate details :—

"And so eftsoons Jesus preserve you and send my cousin Frances a good hour and your honour a glad grandmother.

"Scribbled at London . . . January, 1568."

Evidently this "Frances" is the eldest daughter of the Countess, who married Sir Henry Pierrepont, and whose child is awaited.

Matters as regards the Earl of Shrewsbury did not move so fast as one would expect. It was not till June of 1568 that the final orders reached the Earl to make ready his "castle" of Tutbury for the reception of his romantic royal prisoner. Mary was now at Carlisle, and the part which the Earl was to play in her entourage as suggested in contemporary letters has more the character of that of a prominent cavalier in a princely retinue than that of a military gaoler. The description in the French ambassador's letter reads well :—

"A castle named Tutbury, which is only one hundred miles from here"—London—"and is a very beautiful place as they say, especially for hunting, in which, whenever it takes place, the Earl of Shrewsbury, who has a portion of his estate in that neighbourhood, is ordered to give her his company, along with other Lords and gentlemen thereabout."

The Queen was feeling her way, slowly sounding the Shrewsburys' relatives, careful always to assert her appreciation not only of lord, but of lady. My Lord came to Court, and still her Majesty beat about the bush.

The following letters¹ from the Earl belong to this epoch of the lives of the newly wedded pair :—

“My dear none, being here arrived at Wingfield late yesternight from Rofford, though very weary in toiling about, yet thinking you would be desirous to hear from me, scribbled these few lines to let you understand that I was in health and wished you anights with me. I picked out a very good time, for since my coming from home I never had letters but these this morning from Gilbert, which I send you. I mind to-morrow, God willing, to be with you at Chatsworth : and in the meantime as occurrences [befall] to me you shall be partaker of them. I thank you, sweet none, for your baked capon, and chiefest of all for remembering of me. It will be late to-morrow before my coming to Chatsworth, seven or eight of the clock at the soonest : and so farewell, my true one.

“This 28th June.

“Your faithful husband,

“G. SHREWSBURY.”

“My dear none, having received your letter of the first of December which came in very good time, else had I sent one of these few remaining with me to have brought me word of your health, which I doubted of for that I heard not from you of all this time till now, which drove me in dumps, but now relieved again by your writing unto me. I thank you, sweet none, for your puddings and venison. The puddings have I bestowed in this wise : [a] dozen to my Lady Cobham, and as many to my L. Steward and unto my L. of Leicester : and the rest I have reserved to myself to

¹ Hunter's *Hallamshire*.

eat in my chamber. The venison is yet at London, but I have sent for it hither.

“I perceive Ned Talbot hath been sick, and [is] now past danger. I thank God I have such a none that is so careful over me and mine. God send me soon home to possess my greatest joy : if you think it is you, you are not deceived.

“I will not forget to deal with the Master of the Rolls for young Knifton. He seems to be much my friend, and is now in dealing between Denenge and me, for the lease of Abbot Stake, agreed upon by me and Tamworth he should so do. He holds it at a thousand marks : and the Master of the Rolls hath driven it to five hundred pounds, which methinks too much for such a lease, yet because it lies so, as I am informed, amongst Gilbert’s lands, I have made my steward to offer four hundred pounds, and to get [delay] till the next term, because I would have your advice therein. And for that I live in hope to be with you before you can return answer again, you shall understand that this present Monday in the morning finding the Queen in the garden at good leisure, I gave her Majesty thanks that she had so little regard to the clamorous people of Bolsover¹ in my absence. She declared unto me what evil speech was against me, my nearness and state in housekeeping, and as much as was told her, which she now believes with as good words as I could wish, declaring that ere it were long I should well perceive she did so trust me as she did few. She would not tell me therein, but [I] doubt [not] it was about the custody of the Scottish Queen. Here is private speech that Gates and Vaughan should make suit to have her, but this day

¹ His disaffected tenants at Bolsover.

I perceive it is altered. I think before Sunday these matters will come to some pass, that we shall know how long our abode shall be, but howsoever it falls out, I will not fail but be with you before Christmas, or else you shall come to me.

“The plague is dispersed far abroad in London, so that the Queen keeps her Christmas here, and goeth not to Greenwich as it was meant. My Lady Cobham, your dear friend, wishes your presence here : she loves you well. I tell her I have the cause to love her best, for that she wished me so well to speed as I did : and as the pen writes so the heart thinks, that of all earthly joys that hath happened unto me, I thank God chiefest for you : for with you I have all joy and contentation of mind, and without you death is more pleasant to me than life if I thought I should long be from you : and therefore, good wife, do as I will do, hope shortly of our meeting, and farewell, dear sweet none. From Hampton Court this Monday at midnight, for it is every night so late before I go to my bed, being at play in the privy chamber at Premiro, where I have lost almost a hundred pounds, and lacked my sleep.

“Your faithful husband till death,

“G. SHREWSBURY.

“Wife, tell my daughter Maule that I am not pleased with her that she hath not written to me with her sister : yet will I not forget her and the rest, and pray God to bless them all.

“To my wife the Countess of Shrewsbury at Tutbury give this.”

The daughter “Maule” here named is evidently Mary. Besides Gilbert and Grace Talbot, married as

stated to the Cavendish daughter and son of Lady Shrewsbury, the Earl's children were Francis, the eldest (who married Anne Herbert, daughter of William Earl of Pembroke, and did not inherit, since he died in 1582); Mary, who married Sir George Saville, Kt.; Catherine, who married Henry Earl of Pembroke; Edward, who married Jane (elder daughter of Cuthbert Lord Ogle, co-heiress with the wife of Charles Cavendish), and succeeded to his father's title, after Gilbert, as eighth earl; and Henry Talbot, who married Elizabeth, daughter of Sir William Rayner, and left two daughters.

The next letter from the Earl gives the Queen's important decision :—

“My dear none, I have received your letter of the 8th of December, wherein appeareth your desire for my soon coming. What my desire is thereunto, I refer the same to your construsion.¹ If I so judge of time, methinks time longer since my coming hither without you, my only joy, than I did since I married you: such is faithful affection, which I never tasted so deeply of before. This day or to-morrow we shall know great likelihood of our despatch. I think it will be Christmas Even before I shall arrive at Tutbury. Things fall out very evil against the Scots' Queen. What she shall do yet is not resolved of.

“As it chanches, I am glad that I am here: for if I were not I were like to have most part of my leases granted over my head: there is such suit for leases in reversion of the Duchy. My park that I have in keeping called Morley Park is granted in reversion for thirty

¹ Construction.

years, wherein I have made some stir. My good neighbour hath a promise of it, and if I can get it put in I am about to get a friend of mine to put the forest of the Peak in his book. I have offered a thousand pounds for a lease in reversion for thirty years. I must pay Denege five hundred and forty-one for his lease of Stoke. How money will be had for these matters assure you I know not. I will make such means to Mr. Mildmay for the stay of Tutbury tithe, as I will not be prevented : for it is high time, for there was never such striving and prancing for leases in reversion as be now at this present.

“My L. Steward hath been sick and in danger, but now well. My L. Sheffield is departed this life ; and my L. Paget just after. Your black man is in health.

“Your faithful husband till my end,

“G. SHREWSBURY.

“From the Court this Monday the 13th of December. Now it is certain the Scots’ Queen comes to Tutbury to my charge. In what order I cannot ascertain you.

“To my wife the Countess of Shrewsbury
at Tutbury give this.”

It was not till just the close of 1568 that Shrewsbury was certain of his new duty and in a position to write that triumphant postscript. Within a month, in the beginning of the New Year, he had taken over from Sir Francis Knollys the task which was to prove so engrossing, stupendous, so provocative of every imaginable complication, official and domestic.

Imagine the excitement of my Lady at such a juncture ! She knew the Scottish Queen only by hearsay, and her curiosity must have been kept at boiling pitch while her

heart swelled with importance in the anticipation of the additional chatelaine's duties thrust upon her by the august guest. She had known what it was to deal with a princess in captivity, for she had been acquainted with Elizabeth before her accession. The present matter was far more vital, more portentous. The Queen who rode wearily from Bolton Castle to Sheffield and thence to Tutbury must be humoured as Queen, served as queens are served, but a network of rules were being prepared, not only for her own retinue and the household, but for earl and lady.

The Earl, foreseeing all such domestic complications, had asked the Council for directions as to the treatment of his prisoner. "Remembrances for my L. of Shrewsbury" stands at the head of notes, in his handwriting, all duly numbered. Of these No. 5 reads, "For my wife's access unto her, if she send for her."

To this the reply in Cecil's handwriting is, "The Queen of Scots may see the Countess, if she is sick, or for any other necessary cause, but rarely. No other gentlewoman must be allowed access to her." The remainder of the rules are strict enough, and the pleasant country-house picture drawn by the French Ambassador, De la Forest, in the letter quoted, is rudely effaced by these details. Shrewsbury is to be well fortified by an array of facts against the Scottish Queen, lest her pleading should win his sympathies and her captive condition arouse his indignation too deeply. How the regulations at every turn reveal Elizabeth of England—at once autocratic and apprehensive of her own importance, at once trustful and suspicious! The document is so vital a part of the household appanage of the Shrewsburys from this moment until the close of

their wardership that it is worth quoting in the concise form in which, partly in the original and partly as abstract, it is given in Leader's admirable *Mary Queen of Scots in Captivity*.

"A memorial of certain thinges imparted by the Q. Matie to the erle of Shrewsbery, for the causes following. Gyven at Hampton Courte, the xxvjth day of January 1568, the xjth year of her Mates reign. The Q. has chosen him in consequence of his approved loyalty and faithfulness, and the ancient state and blood from which he is descended, to have the custody of the Queen of Scots.

"The Earl is to treat her, being a Queen, of the Queen Elizabeth's blood, with the reverence and honour meet for a person of his state and calling and for her degree. He must ask Lord Scrope and the Vice Chamberlain [Knollys] about the ceremonies used by them towards her, that 'she may not find herself to be in the usage of herself abused, nor by this removing to have her State amended.'

"Whatever honour he gives her he must take care that by no pretence she finds any means to gain any rule over him to practise for her escape. She must have no opportunity either to escape nor yet to practise with anyone to help her to escape. He doubtless knows how important it is to the Queen's honour and reputation and quietness that Mary does not depart without the Queen's assent. No persons must be in conference with her except those already placed about her as her ordinary servants, and those who have special licence from the Queen. The latter for no longer time than is mentioned in the licence.

"If any persons coming to visit the Earl or anyone

in his household, proffer to come to her presence, or to have conference with any belonging to her, or if she invites them to come to her presence in the house or abroad, under colour of hunting, or other pastime, he shall warn them to forbear, and if needful use his authority to make them desist, and send their names to the Queen.

“Persons coming out of Scotland to see her, if of degrees above that of servants, or if noted to be busy men and practicers, must be remitted to the Queen for licence. If they are mean servants or persons coming only to have relief of her, he shall not be so straight towards them as to give her occasion to say she is kept a prisoner, and yet he must understand their errands and not suffer them to abide where she shall be, or to hover about the country.

“He must make a view of all her ordinary servants when he first takes the charge, and cause a household roll to be made of those necessary and of those who were with her at Bolton. With the advice of the Vice Chamberlain, he must reduce the number, omitting those who are superfluous and who are fit rather for practices than service. . . . Her diet must be kept at the former rate, and payments made by the clerk who was sent for that purpose from the Queen’s household. He (my Lord Shrewsbury) must consult the Vice Chamberlain as to the watching of the house, as he knows her condition and the disposition of those about her. The Queen intended her first to be placed at Tutbury Castle but as the house is not fit, if she is nearer the Earl’s house of Sheffield than Tutbury, she shall remain there till further orders. If she is at Tutbury, it is left to the Earl’s discretion to allow her to remain, or to

remove her to Sheffield or any other of the Earl's houses.

“Because it is thought that she will try to make the Earl think her cause worthy of favour, and that she is not well used in being restrained from liberty, the Queen has ordered, that beside the knowledge which the Earl has of the presumptions produced against her for the murder of her husband, and her unlawful marriage with the principal murderer Bothwell, he shall also be informed of other particulars too long to write here, that he may answer her and her favourers. He may say, as of himself, that if she is known to utter any speeches touching the Queen's honour or doings, it may be an occasion to publish all her actions, which once being done cannot be revoked, but many things must follow to her prejudice.

“The Earl will be allowed wages for 40 persons at 6d. a day, to be used at his discretion.”

As a matter of fact the house at Tutbury was certainly “not fit” for the reception of any guest. The Shrewsburys made application to the Queen for hangings and necessities in the way of furniture ; and these were promised. But they did not arrive. Mary was growing obstreperous and visited all her misery and annoyance on her present gaoler, Sir Francis Knollys. He, poor man, was in despair, with his wife dying, and his piteous requests for discharge from duty unheeded by Elizabeth. No wonder he wrote at last to say that he would take the matter into his own hands, “and as sure as God is in heaven, repair to Court, and suffer any punishment that may be laid upon him, rather than continue in such employment.”

And still the much-needed furniture was not in its place. At last my Lady Shrewsbury, no doubt in desperation, took down such hangings as there were at Sheffield, and with the help of the borrowed details set to work to prepare Tutbury. A supplementary instalment of household articles from Court helped to complete the necessities. The journey from Bolton began on January 25th, in morose, biting weather. It brought Mary of Scotland to the single gate in the wall surrounding Tutbury on the afternoon of February 4th, a Friday. The position of this place was fair enough in the beautiful valley of the Dove, but it was not all the French Ambassador imagined it, and my lady and her household were sore put to it to make it habitable. The scene of commotion and bustle must have palpitated with drama. With messengers bringing letters and the rumours and counter-rumours which filtered through from the country folk the ten days of Queen Mary's journey southward must have been a period of extraordinary tension for all immediately concerned. The condition of that busy, expectant household at Tutbury under my Lady's command is best suggested in the imaginary dialogue overleaf.

CHAPTER IV

HUBBUB

Scene : The presence chamber of Tutbury Castle on a raw day of February, 1569. A casement flapping in the wind. Crimson velvet drapery lies on the floor, and two women squat there, stitching at it. Beyond, through an open door, a suite of smaller rooms full of furniture.

First Sewing Woman. You tug too much of the velvet over to you, Mary. Let be, and be content with your share.

Second Sewing Woman. I only desire to help you, Richardyne. I scarcely can hold my needle for the cold.

1st S.W. Then shut the window, you fool.

2nd S.W. Nay, fool I am not, though I be younger than you. For I did not set the window open. It was the cook. Call him to fasten it.

1st S.W. The cook indeed ! His part is to bake and stew, not hang out of the casements.

2nd S.W. Will there be a great feast, do you think, when this Queen comes ?

1st S.W. There will be feasts every night.

2nd S.W. Lord ! how happy it will be ! They say she loves dancing.

1st S.W. Who told you this ?

2nd S.W. The post that brought my Lord's letter from Bolton. He knew, for he spoke like a Scottish man.

1st S.W. Now I see why the fiddler has come from Chatsworth.

2nd S.W. Yes, to make music he has come. He begged my Lady so sore to keep him here that she promised the poor wretch at last——

1st S.W. There he is, playing down by the kitchen.

2nd S.W. He is coming here. [*Gets up hastily and trips over the velvet. Enter a youth with branches of laurel and ivy. He puts them on a table, and is about to retire when the fiddler enters playing and bowing.*]

The Youth. What do you here, old scraping John?

Fiddler. More than you, fellow of discord, with idle arms.

The Youth [*angrily*]. They are only waiting to pound thee.

Fiddler. I am my Lord's servant more than you. He has many boys like you who can stand and stare, but only one who can fiddle.

The Youth [*advancing*]. Look to thyself. Thy catgut will not shield thee much.

Fiddler [*from behind the table*]. Help, help, Master Crompe!

The Women [*rising and flinging the velvet over the chair*]. Help, help—porter, cook, men, all of you!

1st S.W. [*to the youth*]. Boy, do not brawl in the presence chamber.

2nd S.W. No, no, it is foolish. We each must work to-day that we may dance another day. And how can we dance if you break the fiddler's head?

The Youth [*furious*]. He is a lewd fellow, smooth and gentle to you wenches, but a liar——

Fiddler. Master Crompe. He calls me a liar. [*Enter the Steward, Crompe.*]

Crompe. Stop your bellowing, all. You, Fiddler—drown the chatter with your music, if music you must make. Her Ladyship comes. You—boy, go to the bedchambers above and help to carry down the napery which she will give you. Oh ! there is more to accomplish than any hands can do. The stables are not yet ready, two of the scullions are drunk and must go, the carpenters are short of wood for the mending of the walls of my Lord's guardroom, the roof of the dining-hall leaks, and the roll of canvas for the wall behind the dais, which is mossy and wet, has not come from France. [*Goes out shaking his head.*]

2nd S.W. [*mimicking him*]. Lord, oh, Lord ! the sky will tumble on our heads.

1st S.W. Get back to work, girl. These velvets are for the Scots Queen's bedroom.

2nd S.W. Is that true ? I will stitch hard if—Master Fiddler will play.

Fiddler. All work, not forgetting the business of eating, goes better to music. [*Begins to play, walking up and down the room.*]

2nd S.W. [*laughing*]. I cannot sew. There is an itch in my ankles.

1st S.W. Fudge !

2nd S.W. Do you think it is the plague that I have ?

Fiddler. It means that you must dance and not sew.

[*2nd S.W.*, *jumping up, gathers up her petticoats, and prances in time. The Fiddler plays on, and the youth, entering with napery, thrusts it on to the large table and joins the dance.*]

2nd S.W. Faster, Master Fiddler, till feet are as hot as toasts.

In the middle of it, with a jingle of keys and a rustle of skirts, enter my Lady of Shrewsbury with a long roll of paper in her hands.

Bess [*in the doorway*]. Is this how my command is obeyed?

[The music dies away with a trickle, the dancers fall back against the wall.]

1st S.W. [*rises and curtsies*]. Richardyne's feet were cold, my Lady, and she danced to save them from blains.

Bess [*drily*]. A mess of mustard were the quicker way, I think, to cure *that*. [*To the youth.*] And you—have you also frozen toes?

Youth. Y—yes, my Lady.

Bess. Then go and keep watch outside the castle gate in the wind. That will warm you quick enow. You can play Jumping Joan all the while and nobody to stop you. But so soon as you see a light upon the hill it is the signal that the Queen has passed the woods and is close. [*Exit Youth.*] [*To the Fiddler.*] Remember—you—you must not intrude if you are to be suffered here. You must stay in the kitchens till you are wanted.

Fiddler. My Lady, I went looking for you and thought to find you here to know my duties.

Bess. Like enough! Make no noise till you are ordered. [*He turns to go.*] Stop! What tunes can you play?

Fiddler. A hundred and more—"The Derby Ram," "The Nun's Green Rangers," "The Unconscionable Bachelors," "The Derby Hero," "The Bakewell"—

Bess. Silence! I do not desire to listen to your dictionary. How do you call the air you played but now?

Fiddler. The title I know not, my Lady, but the song of it begins—

You have a lodging in my heart
For which you pay no rent.

Bess. Marry, and you chose that to greet the Queen?

Fiddler. It is for you to choose, my Lady.

Bess. Go to, go to. Back to the kitchens with your fiddle. I will choose later. [*Enter Master Crompe.*] Crompe, Crompe, did you hear what he said—the name of his tune?

Crompe. Yes, my Lady.

Bess. He is an impudent fellow, Crompe.

Crompe. Innocent I trust, my Lady.

Bess. There was a wink in his eye, Crompe. [*Stamps her foot.*] “You have a lodging in my heart”—forsooth! —“For which you pay no rent!” Mark that, Crompe. It mislikes me much. He should play that to my Lord Treasurer at Court. An’ the next letter gives no surety of that I will no more tear down my tapestries to furnish a prison-house.

Crompe [*soothingly*]. My Lord has her Majesty’s promise in writing that the furnishings shall be sent. And for the present we can make shift.

Bess. Well, well, time passes and nothing is finished. [*Sits herself at the table.*] Bring me the ink, good Crompe, that I may check the appointments in the Scots Queen’s chambers. [*Crompe goes out.*] Crompe, Crompe, who has littered this room with this green stuff?

1st S.W. I heard Mistress Elizabeth Cavendish command the branches to be gathered for garlands.

Bess. Garlands?

2nd S.W. For the Queen’s welcome.

Bess. Idleness and foolery. Garlands ! [*Catches sight of her daughter Elizabeth in the doorway.*] Bet, why do you bring confusion into my plans ?

Elizabeth. Lady mother, there were no flowers. I have sought in the lanes, and there is no joy in them. And so I would twine the laurels and ivy into chains and see the leaves shine in the firelight.

Bess [*sharply*]. No time for garlands. There will be chains enough truly. Go, fetch me this green stuff away. Throw it out of the window, Crompe. Bet, fetch your needle and mend me yonder cushion. [*Goes to door and calls.*] Mrs. Glasse ! Wenches ! [*Women come running. Mrs. Glasse, the housekeeper, follows with a bundle of linen.*]

Bess. Listen to me, all of you. Here is my Lord's tale of the things which must be ready. As I read so do you answer, Mrs. Glasse. Thirty pallets must be ready.

Mrs. Glasse. Only twenty have mattresses, my Lady.

Bess. Have you not five feather-beds, woman ? ”

Mrs. G. Only three, my Lady. The two others have been taken for the captain of the soldiers that is coming.

Bess. By whose order ?

Mrs. G. I know not.

Bess. Take them away instantly and put instead the old mattress from the old state-couch. The other five must make shift without mattresses.

Mrs. G. My Lady, there are not pillows for more than fifteen beds.

Bess. But yesterday I gave you out ten new ones.

Mrs. G. We still lack fifteen, save your Ladyship will allow those of chaff to be used.

Bess. Use anything, all you can lay hands upon.

Lord, Lord ! all my substance is swallowed, and still you cry "More pillows !" Beshrew me if you do not eat pillows. Alice, are the ewers and basins in place ?

Alice. Yes, m'lady, though one is cracked and two were broken early this morning by my Lord's hound, which sprang through the window, so that I dropped them in my fright.

Bess. Lord ! these people eat ewers as fast as pillows ! Take away the cracked one and put brass ewers for the other two. No, stay. Leave the cracked one. They say this Queen's folk have a crazy fancy for little dogs and darlings. If we place them new pitchers, they will only break those also.

Alice. Little French dogs . . . ? Oh, they will be sport !

Bess. Hold thy idiot's tongue. Pray Heaven they do not bring monkeys also, like Lady Catherine Grey¹ when she went to the Tower. Kate, where is the Queen's coverlet ? [*Girls bring it forward.*] There is an ugly darn in it. It shall be hidden with some gold lace. Fetch my Lord's old riding-cloak and rip the galloon quickly from it. Do not use the broad, but the narrow. It will seem well enough. To work, to work !

[*Re-enter Crompe.*]

Crompe. The cook and his fellows be ready, my Lady.

Bess. Let him come. [*Enter a procession of kitchen men with dishes.*]

¹ When Lady Catherine Grey was imprisoned in the Tower for her secret marriage with the Earl of Hertford she took amongst her belongings some pet monkeys. These played havoc with the hangings, not in first-rate condition, with which, by Elizabeth's order, the cheerlessness of her prison apartments was mitigated.

Bess [reading from the roll before her]. A pair of capons stuffed with chestnuts.

Cook. The garnishing has yet to be done, my Lady.

Bess. A brisket of pork.

Cook. Boy—bring it round.

[*A cook's boy parades with the dish.*]

Bess. Six carp—these should be served hot.

Cook. My Lady, they simmer slowly.

Bess [reading]. A roast of beef.

[*Two boys parade it and pass on.*]

Bess [going on with the list, while the dishes are presented in turn.]

Hare with little jellies.

Plover trussed and stuffed.

Wheaten cakes.

A mess of firmity.

A heron stewed. You dolts, this should be heated !

Cook. My Lady, my Lady—the ovens will heat it again quickly. I brought it hither that your Ladyship should taste the sauce. [*Presents a spoon. Bess tastes.*]

Bess. I mislike the onion. And for a Queen, there is too much aniseed. Mark that if the dish goes untouched.

Cook. My Lady, they say this Queen will bring her own tasting-gentleman.

Bess. Surely, yes, surely. Who will she not bring ? Her tasting-gentleman to see she is not poisoned by you, Master Cook. Swallow the insult and say your prayers and be sparing of your herbs in future. You were always too set upon aniseed, and 'tis fit only for the colic, to my thinking. Get on, get on with your

dishes. . . . H'm ! the pasties . . . here is only one of liver. I told Crompe to command two . . . two of liver and two of apples. [*The pasties are presented.*]

Bess. Fifty loaves.

Cook. Thirty-eight are here.

Bess [*angrily*]. Always something lacking, it seems. A plague, you fellows ! Understand me, Cook, if the castle goes hungry you shall go more hungry, and your purse still more. Briskets, sallets, eggs, cheeses—where are they ? Crompe, here—take you the bill, and if anything lacks you know who shall first go supperless. Not the Queen, and not your master and lady. Nor the Queen's folk either. But you, Crompe—do you hear me ? You !

Crompe [*agitated*]. Yes, my Lady. Indeed, my Lady. . . . I have made provision to your order . . . for twenty persons.

Bess. Twenty ? And I have told you forty. . . .

Crompe. Thirty beds said Mrs. Glasse.

Bess. Mrs. Glasse knows nothing. Dare you scream ever to me of Mrs. Glasse, Crompe ? [*More quietly.*] Listen, listen. The Queen brings five gentlemen—hungry riding gentlemen ; six gentlewomen—weary riding women. God help us for their airs and graces, their wants and their want-nots ! And the gentlemen must have their men. God help us again ! Three in number these men. And the gentlewomen will bring two wives to wait on them, and there will be fourteen servitors, three cooks. Crompe, cease that arithmetic of your fingers, for it incenses me !—Four boys, ten wenches and children——

Crompe [*aghast, counting on his fingers behind his back*]. 'Tis forty-eight without the children, my Lady.

Bess. Well, well, can I not add two and two as well as you, Crompe? Does it help me if you stand there with a mouth like a porringer?

Crompe. But the children, my Lady!

Bess. And the horses, Crompe!

Crompe. Then there will be grooms also.

Bess. Oil your wits, Crompe, and think of the grooms. Man alive! if you stand in that spot the world will take you for a root of mandragora, to be torn out, howling, by dogs! Stir, stir! Do somewhat, or, if you cannot of yourself, remember you have a mistress, my good fool! [*Rustles out into the corridor.*]

Crompe [*aside*]. Who should ever forget it?

2nd S.W. [*jumping up, points through the casement*]. See, there is something. A boy runs . . . 'tis a post. My Lady, my Lady!

[*Re-enter Lady Shrewsbury.*]

2nd S.W. My Lady . . . there is a fire lighted on that hill, and a boy comes running.

Bess. Then the Frenchwoman is upon us. For God's sake leave your stitching, and mend the rest with pins and nails as you best can! The carpenter shall aid you. To the Queen's bedchamber—quick, quick! [*Drives them in front of her.*] Crompe, you follow. . . . No—go to the stables, the kitchens. Tell the men to bring more coals and bigger logs. . . . [*Exeunt. . . . Her voice pursues the servants down the corridors.*] Pile high the fires! Higher! More logs! Have the torches ready! Pile high the fires!

CHAPTER V

MAKE-BELIEVE

ALL the mighty fuss and preparation aforesaid sufficed only to make Tutbury barely habitable. The airy, pleasant impressions of the French Ambassador were literally castles in the air compared with the fastness itself to which Mary of Scotland travelled. To begin with, her retinue numbered sixty persons, and Heaven knows where they all slept that first night. Mary's own rooms were small enough, and she complained bitterly of them and of the condition of the whole building. Here is her description in a subsequent letter :—

“I am in a walled enclosure, on the top of a hill, exposed to all the winds and inclemencies of heaven. Within the said enclosure, resembling that of the wood of Vincennes, there is a very old hunting lodge, built of timber and plaster, cracked in all parts, the plaster adhering nowhere to the woodwork and broken in numberless places ; the said lodge distant three fathoms or thereabouts from the walls, and situated so low that the rampart of earth which is behind the wall is on a level with the highest point of the building, so that the sun can never shine upon it on that side, nor any fresh air come to it ; for which reason it is so damp, that you cannot put any piece of furniture in that part without its being in four days completely covered with mould. I leave you to think how this must act upon the human body ;

and, in short, the greater part of it is rather a dungeon for base and abject criminals than the habitation fit for a person of my quality, or even of a much lower. . . . The only apartments that I have for my own person consist—and for the truth of this I can appeal to all those that have been here—of two little rooms, so excessively cold, especially at night, that, but for the ramparts and entrenchments of curtains and tapestry which I have had made, it would not be possible for me to stay in them in the daytime; and out of those who have sat up with me at night during my illnesses, scarcely one has escaped without fluxion, cold, or some disorder.”

As for the gay hunting parties which had been anticipated, the only exercise allowed her was in a palisaded vegetable patch called by courtesy a garden.

The first fortnight of that time must have placed a severe strain on the temper and endurance of the autocratic chatelaine. She was not to have access to the royal prisoner, she must obey the orders of her gaoler-husband, himself constantly on tenter-hooks lest his cranky abode should suffer sudden attack from Mary's friends, lest sickness should attack her, or quarrels be brewed between her motley household and his own. My Lady Bess—for once—must keep herself well in the background and still contrive provision for that big household. Doubtless it was she who backed the Earl in his determination to secure at once an understanding with the English Queen as to the household expenditure of the prisoner. He put in a claim for £500 as a preliminary, and a weekly allowance of £52 was arranged. Whether he received it remains to be seen. Mary was not yet entirely a prisoner. That is

to say she did not realise herself as one. Her sister-queen was too crafty to permit that. Shrewsbury, who found Mary calm and, at the outset, bearing household inconveniences cheerfully—hopeful that they were but temporary—gave her a little leash here and there. She evidently insisted on seeing Bess Shrewsbury. “The Queen continueth daily resort unto my wife’s chamber, where, with the Lady Leviston and Mrs. Seaton, she useth to sit working with the needle, in which she much delighteth, and in devising of works ; and her talk is altogether of indifferent and trifling matters without ministering any sign of secret dealing and practice.” So wrote my Lord gaoler to reassure all at Court who might suspect him of insufficient strictness. The fact is, a long and detailed letter to Sir William Cecil from Nicholas White, the first visitor of importance who had spoken at length with Mary at Tutbury, had sounded the alarm. “If I,” says this gentleman, “might give advice there should be very few subjects in this land have access to or conference with this lady. For, beside that she is a goodly personage . . . she hath withal an alluring grace, a pretty Scottish accent, and a searching wit crowned with mildness. Fame might move some to relieve her, and glory joined to gain might stir others to adventure much for her sake. Then joy is a lively infective sense, and carrieth many persuasions to the heart which ruleth all the rest. Mine own affection by seeing the Queen’s majesty, our sovereign, is doubled, and thereby I guess what sight might work in others.” This was the impression she made on a young and gallant courtier loyal enough to Elizabeth. Here, again, she is in the form of a veritable problem as viewed by her first warder, Knollys, who delivered her into Shrews-



*Photo by Richard Keene, Ltd., Derby, from the picture at Hardwick Hall
By permission of his Grace the Duke of Devonshire*

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS

bury's charge. Knollys also pours out his impressions to Cecil :—

“This lady and princess is a notable woman ; she seemeth to regard no ceremonious honour beside the acknowledging of her estate regal ; she sheweth a disposition to speak much, to be bold, to be pleasant, and to be very familiar. She sheweth a great desire to be avenged of her enemies, she sheweth a readiness to expose herself to all perils in hope of victory, she delighteth much to hear of hardiness and valiancy, commending by name all approved hardy men of her country, although they be her enemies, and she concealeth no cowardice even in her friends. The thing that most she thirsteth after is victory, and it seemeth to be indifferent to her to have her enemies diminished either by the sword of her friends, or by the liberal promises and rewards of her purse, or by division and quarrels raised among themselves : so that for victory's sake pain and peril seemeth pleasant unto her : and in respect of victory, wealth and all things seemeth to her contemptible and vile. Now what is to be done with such a lady and a princess, or whether such a princess and lady to be nourished in one's bosom ? or whether it be good to halt and dissemble with such a lady I refer to your judgment.”

It did not take Shrewsbury and his lady long to realise what they had undertaken to nourish in their bosom. The great thing was to distract her with light and little things. Of these she had sufficient at first to prevent her from much brooding in the intervals of writing her vivid and endless letters to France, to Scotland, to Burghley, and to the English Queen.

Gentleman visitors being practically taboo, there remained only the Countess of Shrewsbury as a set-off from Mary's own ladies. These were few—Mrs. Bruce and Lady Livingston, who was ailing, while of the “four Maries,” whose beauty and grace helped to weave the romantic legend of the vanished Court at Holyrood, there remained in the royal service but one, Mary Seton. Her Queen took a special interest in her, and was very dependent on her. Mary Seton surely knew her mistress through and through. Her post must at times have been one of great risk and mental torture. She was constantly in personal attendance, dealing with the Queen's wardrobe and dressing her hair—for in this, history says, she was as clever as any skilled perruquier. Mary at first scarcely had a rag to cover her. Two bits of black velvet and some darned underclothing had been doled out to her, by Elizabeth, on her arrival in England. Much scorn and merriment they surely caused in the Scotch Queen's closet! Clothing to wrap her, hangings—that veritable “rampart” of tapestries of which Mary spoke in the letter quoted—were necessary for her existence, and she would have her environment gracious and artistic even if the tapestries were of sacking. With the aid, no doubt, of Bess the chatelaine, some appearance of regality was contrived and maintained—so the letters of the day show—as best might be. The Shrewsburys had no objection to that. Everyone entered apparently on the surface into the little game of make-believe which “this Queen here” (as she is constantly described in letters from the houses in which she was immured) played throughout the fifteen years of her life under the Earl's roof. For Mary was ever an



Photo by Richard Keene, Ltd., Derby

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS' APARTMENTS AND DUNGEONS AT TUTBURY

arch-romanticist. This sense of romance constituted two-thirds of her attraction. Both Queens were playing waiting games, but Mary was determined to play hers effectively in spite of all conditions. And thus we have that vivid picture of her pretence court carried on under the eye of Bess Shrewsbury. The Scots Queen, seated on her dais under her canopy bearing the elusive legend "En ma fin est mon commencement," issued her orders touching her household, received eagerly all scraps of news which filtered through to her and any visitors that were permitted. But the more interesting part was that of the Earl's lady, who stood as the social barrier between the outer world, so full of stirring incident, and the mock court indoors. How much to tell her Scottish majesty and how little, what gossip to retail and what to suppress, was no light task for a talkative, energetic lady, who knew the ins and outs not only of the English Court but the character of its mistress. Mary was always good company. Elizabeth gave her subjects plenty to talk about. One wonders, in the light of a certain letter which Mary afterwards wrote to the Queen, how far¹ Bess Shrewsbury allowed her tongue at this juncture to trip out of sheer vivacity and desire to please her prisoner-guest. Just now, however, it is too early to imagine intrigue in this direction. The women could safely discuss clothes and the new fashion of doing the hair. Mary Seton was acknowledged to be the best "busker of hair in any country," "and every other day she had a new device of head-dressing, without any cost, and yet setteth forth a woman gaily well." Mary loved her

¹ The famous scandal-letter about the Countess of Shrewsbury from Mary to Elizabeth, to which reference follows later.

wigs, her head-dresses, embroidery, her little pets, and the contriving of presents of needlework. With these Bess could sympathise. On occasion she wanted French silks, and when Mary wrote to France a list of goods which she desired, she would send for a length of silk for my Lady, and a friendly transaction took place between the two. Truly a charming relationship! And all the time Mary was not too bored, for she was writing love letters to her new suitor—the Duke of Norfolk.

Let us take in the political situation for a moment. It was the spring of 1569—just two years since the murder of Darnley, since when Mary had the impression of a procession of violent events to wipe out of her mind. Events since that horrible night had travelled at a wild speed. Her abasement before Bothwell, her desperate game of bluff—that is to say, her mad marriage with him, in spite of the opposition of all her friends, while she yet wore her discreet mourning for the wretched Darnley—her sudden awakening to bare realities, and the shock of the knowledge that she had given herself wholly to a mere adventurer, and a brutal one at that—these were some of the sinister facts over which, in this solitude and stillness of her English life, she had time enough to brood. Then came the final revelation of the almost wholesale perfidy of her Scottish noblemen, and the three weeks of her ghastly third honeymoon, which amounted to nothing but a preliminary imprisonment, ending in the gross insults of the populace, which drove her distracted on her way to the fortress of Lochleven. The detection and flight of Bothwell, her Scottish imprisonment, her escape and her flight to England—all these were part of the crimson

pageant from which she had emerged, shattered in body, soul-worn, to face the problem of her life. Her baby boy was far from her in the hands of her brother and worst enemy, Earl Moray, the traitor to whom the power of Elizabeth gave approval as regent. But Moray himself had executed a *volte-face*. For his own purposes he now assumed a highly moral and affectionate tone towards his kinswoman. He advised this, her fourth marriage, on the score that it was the best chance of wiping out the stigma which clung to her in connection with her passion for Bothwell and her illegal union with him. "Take a suitable and godly person to be your spouse and you will at once assume a very high place in my excellent esteem" was practically his attitude. Mary knew his power. Was not the villain in constant intercourse with Cecil, Elizabeth's right hand? She knew also that marriage was the only way out of prison and back to her throne. Three husbands had failed her. Even Moray conceded that she "had been troubled in times past with children, young, proud fools, and furious men"—the anæmic Francis II, Darnley, and Bothwell. As a woman she could attract any man she chose. And the Duke of Norfolk was one of the premier gentlemen of England, inclined to espouse her faith, and had powerful friends among the nobles near the Border. The plan was exciting. France and Spain must back her up in it. It was very difficult to send and receive letters. No wonder that the strain of this secret, with the bad weather and the difficulties under which the Tutbury household laboured of securing sufficient provisions and sufficient fuel to warm the cranky building, resulted in the illness of the prisoner.

After much letter-writing there came from Court the permission for removal for which the Earl and Mary longed. The household was to take up its abode now at Wingfield Manor. Away went my Lady ahead to put up the curtains and see to the carpets and pallets and other upholstery, and a week or two later away went the cavalcade after her. Her chatelaine's art and dexterity had freer play here. Wingfield Manor, in its ruins, suggests a house of grace, comfort, and importance, well proportioned, and soundly built in a stately manner. Even Mary, aware of its tolerably fortified nature, its guardroom and dungeons, its massive keep and earthworks, conscious of the nightly sentinels under her windows, could call it "a fair palace." And my Lady was surely in her element. It was not exactly the rich domestic peace, the family life for which she or her husband had bargained. They were forced to isolate themselves from their children to a great extent, lest the comings and goings connected with their own family should entice strangers or messengers of doubtful character. But the eyes of England were upon the Earl and his lady. Where Mary was there abounded romance, intrigue, and mystery. Spain, France, Scotland, all were watchful, waiting for the least news. And possibly the Queen's command and the distinction conferred on the Shrewsburys carried them far along the painful task on which they had embarked. There is no doubt that Bess had a better time of it in the bargain than her lord. The ultimate responsibility was his. Moreover, his was a nature conscientious almost to a morbid degree. He was forced to receive attacks without and within and to keep his head cool. He must report himself in long letters to Mr. Treasurer, he must bear with the com-



Photo by Valentine and Sons, Dundee

THE RUINS OF WINGFIELD MANOR

plaints and entreaties of his captive. Mary was not so much of a prisoner that she could not rush to his suite of rooms and upbraid the authority by which her Scottish messengers were detained and her letters examined. Her abuse and lamentation, defiance and tears were shared alike by husband and wife. In reporting all this in detail to the Court, he insists upon the necessity of his wife's co-operation. In the same breath he makes it piteously clear that the matter is not one for diversion or satisfaction to either of them. In this picture he draws of their joint life in such letters, Tutbury or Wingfield shelters not one prisoner, but three. The royal lady is scarcely a moment out of their sight or hearing. The only advantage of her constant invasion of my Lady's chamber is that the latter may watch her the more closely and report more minutely upon her looks and words.

Already by this time the Shrewsburys could enter into the feelings of Sir Francis Knollys when he longed to shake off his irksome duties. Had the Earl foreseen the extent of the burden thrust upon him he would have followed the example of his comrade-in-arms and begged for instant release. All he could and did do, however, was to endure, while protesting his loyalty.

There was excitement enough in store for everyone when Mary's adviser, the Bishop of Ross, was actually permitted to join the Wingfield household. This was the signal for the crowding of Scottish folk to the vicinity. These came constantly to pay their court to Mary, thereby increasing all the domestic complications of Earl and lady, to say nothing of the added cost in catering and stabling entailed by such "traffic."

Nor did it help them that Mary should fall ill. After delays two physicians were sent from Court, and besides insisting upon a thorough ventilation and cleaning of her apartments they advised her removal to yet another of the family mansions.

This time it was to Chatsworth that the cavalcade travelled. The busy Countess had not yet completed her great scheme of building. Yet a part of the then "new house" was sufficiently completed for use, and though there was as yet no stately presence chamber here, nor ballroom, nor great dining-hall, as at Wingfield, the surroundings were sylvan and reassuring, and the little raised and moated garden where Mary would take the air was far more agreeable than the tangled garden patch at Tutbury. In May the change to the meadows by the Derwent must have been delicious. By June 1st the visit was ended and away went the cortège again, my Lady Bess included, back to Wingfield. The Earl, for the first time since Mary's arrival, took a few days' leave of absence and again went to Chatsworth. This brief absence immediately gave rise to trouble and suspicious reports. While struggling with indisposition he hurried back, and had just time to report that all was well at Wingfield when ague and fever laid him low. His wife took command of the situation. His condition was so critical that she wrote to Cecil asking that some arrangement "for this charge" should be made in case he should grow worse. Cecil took action at once, but before any change in the command at Wingfield could be made the Earl was recovering, and his wife wrote to reassure the Queen, through Cecil, and put in a word for her own loyalty :—



Photo by Richard Keene, Ltd., Derby

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS BOWER, CHATSWORTH

“Of my duty in all respects, God, that is my witness of my doings and meanings, will defend me, I trust, against the evil that malice would unto me. No enemy would I willingly refuse to be my judge in this case, that hath power to think and speak truly, but most heartily do I thank you for your right friendly admonition, knowing that I cannot too much remember my duty, like as I would be no less sorry if I were not persuaded that you did write only of good will, without all cause of suspicion. I have hitherto found you to be my singular good friend, and so I trust you will continue, which God grant I may requite to my desire.”

Poor Shrewsbury did not recover quickly. He suffered mentally as much as bodily all through this summer of 1569, and begged a few days' grace to visit the baths at Buxton. This was withheld and delayed, and, in despair, he went without permission. Immediately the Queen was told of it and instructed Burghley to pounce on him in a letter. Naturally he hurried home full of abject apology, and, though he found the household at Wingfield tranquil, was much annoyed at the insanitary state of the manor in consequence of the number of people in and about it. A little crowd of no less than two hundred and fifty persons now constituted the entourage of prisoner, Earl, and Countess. In order to wipe off all undesirables, he recommended another change of domicile—this time to his estate of Sheffield.

The Earl possessed two manors here—the Lodge or Manor on the hill, and the Castle in the valley above the meadows—now built over—where the Dun and

Sheaf joined their waters. This move was regarded as a most excellent method for change and expansion. Both houses were habitable, there was good fishing, and plenty of ground for exercise without going out of bounds. Nothing was lacking now to hasten the departure save the royal permission.

CHAPTER VI

PLOT AND COUNTERPLOT

THE move to Sheffield was now abandoned because of the desperate excitement aroused in Elizabeth's mind by the disclosure of the love affair which was brewing between Mary and the Duke of Norfolk. This matter for some time was not entirely a secret. A certain number of influential English nobles agreed with those of Scotland that such a marriage would be an excellent solution of the entire Scottish question. Even Leicester himself, adored of Elizabeth, joined his opinion to theirs. And these gentlemen had drawn up a proposal to Mary of which one clause runs, "Whether, touching her marriage with the Duke of Norfolk which had been moved to her by the Earl of Moray and Lidington, she would wholly refer herself to the Queen's Majesty and therein do as she would have her and as her Majesty did like thereof—willing that all things should be done for her Majesty's surety, which might be best advised by the whole Council."

Her reply to this document, especially to the clause quoted, was clear, dignified, and highly emphatic. She did not doubt the English Queen's good faith, nor the friendship of her nobles, nor the goodwill and liking of the Duke. She adroitly declared that she never regarded marriage as a mere means to recover power and position, saying, "I assure you that if either men

or money to have reduced my rebels to their due obedience could have ticed me I could have been provided of a husband ere now. But I . . . did never give ear to any such offer." She fully calculated what she would lose by this marriage in regard to all her "friends beyond the seas." The Duke of Alva was trying to secure her co-operation in the invasion of England. She was coquetting with the Duke of Anjou. She was writing to Rome. By the document she had signed she laid aside all future schemes, while she could still nourish the secret hope that, once restored to the Scottish throne in place of her baby son, she would, in default of Elizabeth's marriage, inherit the throne of England. The whole matter was now on such a broad and amicable footing that apparently nothing was wanting but the longed-for "Bless you, my children" from the lips of Elizabeth.

By September this dream was rudely dispelled. Norfolk was summoned to Court, roundly abused—Elizabeth, as one of her courtiers writes of her, could "storne passinglie"—and poor Shrewsbury received a severe snub. The Queen practically declared him a useless gaoler: "I have found no reliance on my Lord Shrewsbury in the hour of my need, for all the fine speeches he made me formerly, yet I can in no wise depend on his promise." Therefore she added two guards—the Earl of Huntingdon and Viscount Hereford.

More household complications, more goings and comings, more trouble for Earl and Countess! Afflicted with chronic gout and irritated in every direction, Shrewsbury decided to make for Tutbury again. A tactless royal order addressed to Huntingdon (whom

Mary also hated) over the head of Shrewsbury bred fresh discomfort and annoyance in the Castle. Things were, however, gradually smoothed over. The jealousy between Mary's gaolers was allayed on the one hand by the news that the Queen's apprehensions were justified by the disappearance of the Duke of Norfolk from Court, while the alarm of Mary was increased fourfold by the cross-questioning to which she was subjected and the news of the sudden arrest of her ducal lover.

These were dramatic days which Bess of Shrewsbury witnessed. Letters were intercepted, coffers suddenly searched in the Scots Queen's apartments, there were incursions of men with "pistolets," constant dismissals of the Queen's people, sudden dismissal, even, of the Countess's own servants. But the gaps at the board were immediately filled by Huntingdon and his retinue, for whom the Shrewsburys were expected to provide without any increase of allowance, on the score that the present numbers of the household did not exceed those at Wingfield and elsewhere. The irony of this, added to the suggestions that the Earl had been too kind to his prisoner, and that his request to be allowed to deal as before with Mary without the assistance of any other officer, sprang from some person or persons "too much affectionated to her," created havoc in Shrewsbury's mind. Of course he visited his anger on his colleague Huntingdon in the form of morose hints. In that atmosphere of wholesale suspicion he could not speak out except in a letter to head-quarters. He knew that Elizabeth's sinister expressions implied suspicions of his Countess. It is difficult to understand exactly what this lady was "after," in the vulgar

phrase, at this moment. For Mary, with whom she had hitherto been on excellent terms, now distrusted her also. She expressed this distrust *tout au plat*, as she would say, to Walsingham in October, and told him not to attach any credit "to the schemes and accusations of the Countess who is now with you." Apparently my Lady had left for the Court, and was there making good her case and her husband's. As likely as not she was furiously jealous of the authority wrested from her husband in favour of Huntingdon, and overwrought, like everyone else, by the acute tension of the situation. Henceforward in the correspondence with Cecil sturdy disclaimers of treason on the part of Earl and lady are always cropping up. The following is from Shrewsbury to Cecil, October, 1569 :—

"Sir,—I have received your letter, thinking myself beholden unto you for your friendly care over me. I hear to my grief that suspicion is had of over much goodwill borne by my wife to this Queen and of untrue dealing by my men. For my wife thus must I say, she hath not otherwise dealt with that Queen than I have been privy unto and that I have had liking of, and by my appointment hath so dealt that I have been the more able to discharge the trust committed unto me. And if she for her dutiful dealing to her Majesty and true meaning to me should be suspected that I am sure hath so well deserved, she and I might think ourselves fortunate. And where I perceive her Majesty is let to understand that by my wife's persuasion I am the more desirous to continue this charge, I speak it afore God she hath been in hand with me as far as she durst and more than I thought well of

since my sickness to procure my discharge. I am not to . . .¹ by her otherwise than I think well of."

From the close of this year till the execution of the Duke of Norfolk in 1572 the history of George Talbot and Bess Hardwick is bound up with the story of the tissue of conspiracies which wound itself about Mary. The Norfolk plot, with which Mary was to be drawn out of prison, was a stout rope woven of many strands; the net which Cecil constructed for his prey was close-meshed and wide-spreading. There were constant alarms and excursions for the Earl and his people. He succeeded in getting rid of Huntingdon, but he was incessantly in fear of a rising of the northern nobles to whom Norfolk had appealed for their armed support; and when this fear was realised and the armed Earls arrived within fifty odd miles of Tutbury a hasty removal was necessary. Coventry was the only place which suggested itself until the hostile demonstration fizzled out and Tutbury could be regained.

The new year found the household re-established there. While Mary, in poor health, acted as though she had no inkling of conspiracy, while the Duke of Norfolk and the Bishop of Ross, her adviser, were in the Tower, miniature plots again disturbed the tenor of existence, and for once the Earl was permitted to choose his own road, and to remove his captive with bag and baggage to Chatsworth.

This was a pleasanter place than Tutbury for the inditing of love letters, as Mary found. But her Duke was a broken reed. He wanted to leave the Tower, and

¹ Blank in the MS.

to Elizabeth he vowed he would not marry her rival. The summer passed on and the conditions of imprisonment at Chatsworth fluctuated from "straitness" to indulgence according to the suspicions of Elizabeth and the reports of those who were jealous spies of the Earl's slightest actions. Things assumed a more hopeful aspect in spite of the discovery of another minor plot to free Mary by letting her down from one of the windows of the Countess's spacious and elegant house—still unfinished. Elizabeth about this time actually contemplated Mary's freedom and her re-establishment as a sovereign ; whereupon a treaty to this end was carefully discussed !

Negotiations came to such a pass that Mr. Treasurer himself was empowered to travel to Chatsworth and confer with the prisoner. He took his wife with him, and between business and pleasure the visit passed off well. Cecil wrote a long and complimentary "leaving letter" on behalf of himself and his wife, chiefly interesting in this connection because it indicates how Lady Shrewsbury played her part as hostess.

"We have fully satisfied her Majesty with the painful and trusty behaviour of my Lady your wife in giving good regard to the surety of the said Queen ; wherein her Majesty surely seemed to us to be very glad, and used many good words, both of your Lordship's fidelity towards herself, and of the love that she thought my Lady did bear to her. . . . And thus I humbly take my leave of your Lordship and my Lady, to whom my wife hath written to give her thanks for certain tokens whereof I understood nothing afore she told me of them ; and sorry I am my Lady should have



From an engraving by W. T. Ryall, after the painting by Mark Gerard

WILLIAM CECIL. LORD BURGHLEY

bestowed such things as my wife cannot recompense as she would, but with her hearty goodwill and service, which shall always be ready to her favour and mine also: assuring yourself that to my uttermost I will be to your Lordship and to my Lady as sure in good will as any poor friend you have."

Like all the schemes of Elizabeth the aforesaid treaty hung fire. Suspense and disappointment had their usual result upon Mary. Once more she fell ill. Had she died on their hands Earl and Countess would have been open to the worst suspicions. They found themselves always out of pocket in regard to her maintenance; they were themselves, obviously, more or less prisoners in their own house; they had begged to be released from "this charge." In an age when poisonings were rife and assassinations common they would have been suspected by all parties of all sorts of foul play. Mary's loyal gentleman, John Beton, the prægustator, must have had enough to do at this time in tasting the dishes for the daily menus. Shrewsbury meanwhile kept a sharp look-out and at once suggested change of air. Mary, in spite of the pain in her side, symptom of a chronic malady, and one which always attacked her when she was the least out of health, was only too ready to move. This time the destination was Sheffield—the castle.

Matters grew worse and worse in regard to the captive in spite of all these precautions. Down came the Bishop of Ross—now set at liberty—and the Court physician, while all the world knew that for this illness there was but one cure—liberty. Only intrigue kept Mary alive at the close of 1570. The rest of the

spring and summer of 1571 witnessed her return to the proposals to the Duke of Norfolk, the co-operation of Ridolfi, the preparations by her Scottish partisans, the crystallisation of the plan of invasion by Philip of Spain. The whole toil of this great enterprise was nullified by the curiosity of a mere merchant, an innocent messenger chosen to carry a bag of money destined to further the plot. He mistrusted the contents, carried the bag to head-quarters, and inside were the incriminating letters which led to the second imprisonment of Norfolk and the gradual unravelling of the conspiracy. During the lengthy process of examining the many people involved there were uneasy moments for all sorts and conditions of men. It was a most uncomfortable time for the Shrewsburys. It was open to any of their dismissed servants who were arrested to inculcate their former employers, and the latter were probably prepared for such contingencies. Yet a letter like the following would descend upon the Countess somewhat like a bombshell. The man Lascelles mentioned in it was an ex-servant under arrest, and when threatened with torture pleaded guilty to the charge, giving as excuse that what he did was known to the Countess.

“It may please your Ladyship,

“Where of late Bryan and Hersey Lascelles having been before my Lords of her Majesty’s Council, it appeareth directly by the letters both of the Queen of Scots and of the Duke of Norfolk also, that Hersey, as he confessess also himself has been a dealer sometimes with the Queen there by the means of his brother’s being in service there ; and yet that his dealing was not

without knowledge of your Ladyship, to the end, as he says, that the same might always be known. I have thought good to advertise your Ladyship thereof, and withal to pray you to let me understand the truth of such matter as your Ladyship doth know of the said Hersey Lascelles' dealings from time to time as particularly as your Ladyship can remember. And so I take my leave of your Ladyship.

“From London, the 13th of October, 1571.

“Your Ladyship's at commandment,

“W. BURGHLEY.

“To the right honourable and my very good Lady, the Countess of Shrewsbury. Haste, haste, haste.”

A nice letter to receive on a serene autumn day! Carefully worded and dignified though it is, it opens up vistas of suspicion and treachery. The Countess was away, and her lord had to bear the first brunt of it alone. Perhaps this was just as well, as it gave him a chance of clearing their honour independently. For, of course, he recognised in it an urgent official document. The reading must have cost him a bad quarter of an hour. There was no time to be lost in again asserting his wife's integrity. A few seconds of miserable suspense would possibly ensue ere his trust and loyalty conquered all fears, and he sat down to write first to his wife, enclosing the letter from Court, and then to tell Burleigh that some serious misconstruction must have been placed on the fact that he always empowered his lady to interest herself in such persons as Lascelles and his doings, the better to keep her spouse apprised of Mary's plots: “I willed my wife to deal with him and others to whom the Queen bears familiar

countenance, so as the better to learn her intentions." To this he adds a diplomatic postscript, assuring Burleigh that this letter is penned independently of any collusion with his wife.

The Countess, fenced in by consciousness of innocence, backed by the sense of possession, and seated in the heart of her own pleasant estate, rich now in the burnished glory of autumn, writes *en grande dame* from Chatsworth on October 22nd :—

"Your letters touching Henry Lassells came to my hands after my husband had answered them. I doubt not you are persuaded of my dutiful service, but lest you should think any lack of goodwill to answer, I thought it meet to advertise you of my whole doings in the matters.

"As soon as I had intelligence that this Lassells had some familiar talk with the Queen of Scotland, and that my Lord thereupon had laid watch to his doings, this Lassells belike suspecting of my knowledge thereof, desired that he might offer unto me some special matter touching that Queen, with great desire that I should in no wise utter it, for, saith he, she hath most earnestly warned me not to tell you of all creatures. I then hoping to hear of some practice, answered him that he might assure himself not only to be harmless, but to be well rewarded also at the Queen Majesty's hands, and of my Lord, if he would plainly and truly show of her doings and devices, meet to be known. Then he told me with many words that she pretended great goodwill unto him, and of good liking of him, and that she would make him a lord, but, saith he, I will never be false to the Queen's Majesty, nor to my Lord, my master.

Further than this I could not learn of him. Then I warned him to remember his duty and to beware of her, and that she sought to abuse him, and that I knew for certain that she did hate him. He said then that he would take heed, and advertise me of all that he could learn. After this he came to me again, and told me of her familiar talk as before, and of no further matter, saving that he said that he told her how he marvelled that she could love the Duke,¹ having so foul a face, and that she answered that she could like him well enough, because he was wise. Then I warned him again more earnestly than I did before, and told him of her hatred towards him. Then he seemed to credit me. Albeit a while after he desired me by his letters to certify him how I knew she hated him, for, saith he, if she so do she is the falsest woman living. Then my Lord and I perceiving his mind so fondly occupied on her and knowing him to be both vain and glorious, and that he was more like to be made an instrument to work harm than to do good, my Lord despatched him out of service, as he hath divers others upon suspicion at sundry times. This came to my knowledge about Candlemas, next after the Northern rebellion, and he was put away about Easter following. I never knew of any dealing between the Queen and the Duke of Norfolk, either by Lassells or anyone else. If I had I trust you think I would have discovered it."

It is not surprising that the Earl's wife kept aloot for a while and preferred Chatsworth just now. Sheffield was a regular dungeon: the Scottish Queen was only allowed to take an airing on the leads. No

¹ Of Norfolk.

domestic cheerfulness was possible, no social intercourse, and every letter sent or received was a source of anxiety.

Both for the sake of social decency and because of the necessity to impress the always scandalous world with her conjugal devotion, the Countess however returned presently to the fortress and took up her share of the daily burden of wardenship.

Her presence was more than ever necessary now. The Duke of Norfolk's trial was fixed for a date early in the New Year, and the Earl's assistance thereat was indispensable, for he was made Lord High Steward of England in the place of the arraigned nobleman. The command at Sheffield was therefore temporarily assigned, not to Huntingdon this time, but to Sir Ralph Sadler. He arrived, the Earl left for London, and Bess Shrewsbury remained to keep a hand upon the situation and play her own cards. She did this incessantly till her husband's return. Circumstances gave her most excellent opportunities for making a good impression on Sadler. It was her business to walk on those leads of the now vanished castle with the prisoner and to carry her daily such news as it was considered well to communicate. There was very little variety in the days. When the weather was bad Mary kept to her rooms. When it improved she took her airing, but had not much refreshment for her eyes. There was little to do on the leads but stroll to and fro, gazing at Sheffield Lodge on the hill, or at the water and meadows below. And for the ear there was nothing beyond music on the virginals to charm it, no sounds to distract the country silence, except the opening and closing of the castle gates, and the roll of the drum



From the picture in the possession of the Duke of Norfolk

THOMAS HOWARD, DUKE OF NORFOLK

at six o'clock morning and evening, when the watches were set and the password given.

To all who are students of the latter years of Mary's life the letters of Sir Ralph Sadler, written during this time, must be familiar. His whole attention is naturally concentrated on the interesting captive, but here and there we get side glimpses of Lady Shrewsbury and her power as a kind of self-ordained lady of the bedchamber to Mary.

The news of Norfolk's death sentence was not long in coming. The Earl of Shrewsbury himself had to pronounce it with true and bitter tears, and Cecil, now Lord Burghley, at once wrote to Sheffield. A fact so important must be communicated to Mary at once. It was due to her both as Norfolk's accomplice and as a prisoner of quality. It was highly important that the effect of it on her should be gauged and duly reported. For this sweet errand the Countess was chosen. A previous announcement had, however, reached her, and took the wind out of the Countess's sails. What a situation! She found the Queen "all bewept and mourning," and had the doubtful taste to ask "what ailed her." Mary, with great dignity and pathos, replied that she was sure that the Countess must already know the cause and would sympathise, and she expressed further her intense grief lest anything she had written to Elizabeth on behalf of Norfolk had brought him and her other friends to such a pass. The Countess had common sense, and her rejoinder was logical and undoubtedly correct, but she need not have hit quite so hard as in her reply, quoted by Sadler. For a woman of imagination—and imagination of a practical kind Bess Shrewsbury certainly possessed—

it was a cruel answer, and not the least part of the cruelty was the scathing condemnation of one who she knew might have been Mary's husband. It seems to have crushed Mary. She could bear no further discussion of the matter, and withdrew into herself to nurse her sorrow. "And so like a true lover she remaineth, still mourning for her love," wrote Sadler, much touched by her attitude. This letter of his is graphic enough to be quoted in full :—

"Please it, your Lordship,

"The posts whether they work or play have their hire, and therefore I spare not their labour though I have none other occasion than to advertise your L. that all is well here concerning this charge, and that yesterday I received your letters of the 17th of this present (for which I most heartily thank your L.), together with a brief discourse of the Duke's arraignment and condemnation, which I forthwith imparted unto my Lady of Shrewsbury to the end she might take occasion to make this Queen understand of the same ; and also I gave it out to the gentlemen in this House both what number of the Nobility did pass upon his trial, and also that his offences and treasons were such, and so manifestly and plainly proved, that all the noble men did not only detest the same, but also without any manner of scruple objected by common consent everyone of them did pronounce him guilty. Which, being put abroad here in the house after this sort, was brought unto the knowledge of this Queen by some of her folk which heard it, before my Lady came unto her, for the which this Queen wept very bitterly, so that my Lady found her all to be wept and mourning,

and asking her what she ailed, she answered that she was sure my Lady could not be ignorant of the cause, and that she could not but be much grieved, to understand of the trouble of her friends, which she knew did fare the worse for her sake, for sure she was that the Duke fared the worse for that which she of late had written to the Q. Majesty ; and said further that he was unjustly condemned, protesting that as far as ever she could perceive by him or for anything she knew he was a true man to the Queen her sister : but being answered by my Lady that as she might be sure that whatsoever she had written to the Q. Majesty could do the Duke neither good nor harm touching his condemnation, so if his offences and treasons had not been great and plainly proved against him those noble men which passed upon his trial would not for all the good on earth have condemned him. She thereupon with mourning there became silent, and had no will to talk any more of the matter, and so like a true lover she remaineth still mourning for her love. God, I trust, will put it into the Queen Majesty's heart so to provide for herself that such true lovers may receive such rewards and fruits of their love as they have justly deserved at her Majesty's hands.

“All the last week this Queen did not once look out of her chamber, hearing that the Duke stood upon his arraignment and trial, and being troubled by all likelihood by a guilty conscience and fear to hear of such news as she hath now received. And my presence is such a trouble unto her that unless she come out of her chamber I come little at her, but my Lady is seldom from her, and for my part I have not since my coming hither so behaved myself towards her as

might justly give her occasion to have any such misliking of me : though indeed I would not rejoice at all of it, if she had any better liking. But though she like not of me yet I am sure this good lady and all the gentlemen and others of this house do like well enough of me : which doth well appear by their courteous and gentle entertainment of me and mine. My Lord hath a costly guest of me, for I and my men and 36 horses of mine do all lie and feed here at his charge, and therefore the sooner he come home the better for him. Trusting his L. be now on the way and therefore I forbear to write to him. But if he be there, it may please you to tell him that all is well here, and that my Lady and I do long to see his L. here. And as I doubt not she would most gladly have him here, so I am sure she cannot long for him more than I do, looking hourly to hear some good news from your L. of my return. And so I beseech Almighty God to preserve and keep you in long life and health, and to increase you in honour and virtue. From Sheffield Castle the 21st of January at night 1571. With the rude hands of

“Your L. to command as your own

“R. SADLER.

“To the right honourable and my very good lord,
my Lord of Burghley, of the Queen Majesty's
Privy Council.”

Never was the contrast between the two principal ladies in Sheffield Castle so marked as at this moment. Mary mourns for Norfolk, for the ruin of her hopes, for the treaty of freedom which now can never be carried through. Bess sails about the castle aware



From a print in the British Museum

SHEFFIELD MANOR HOUSE.

of everything at Court and at home ; the posts bring her affectionate letters from the Earl, while her children and his flourish under their respective tutors. Chatsworth is still a-building, and she signs orders for stone and wood and coal and fodder. She was a good hostess to Sadler, and when he relinquished his duties gladly enough in February, upon the Earl's return, he was positive that Lady Shrewsbury was deserving of great commendation and "condign thanks" for the manner in which she filled her important position. She was very much of a personage, and her correspondence exhibits very few of the traits usually described as "feminine," while her friends fully estimated her influence and her interest in the larger events. The following lengthy letter gives the complexity of the political situation, and though of course it belongs to a date previous to the execution of Norfolk, is placed here as an illustration of the stirring times in which the great lady lived and the events which had happened during the first year or two of her fourth marriage. It is unsigned, and is evidently from some connection or possibly a gentleman of the Shrewsbury household, who is keeping his ears and eyes wide open at Court :—

"To the Countess of Shrewsbury,

"My most humble duty remembered unto your honourable good lord. May it please the same to understand that I have sent you herein enclosed the articles of peace concluded and proclaimed through all France, in French, because they are not at this hour to be had in English (which are translated and in printing), and if the peace be kept, the Protestants be indifferently well. The great sitting is done at Norwich ; and, as I

do hear credibly, that Appleyard, Throgmorton, Redman, and another are condemned to be hung, drawn, and quartered ; and Hobart and two more are condemned to perpetual imprisonment, with the loss of all their goods and lands during their lives. The four condemned for high treason, and the other for reconciliation. They were charged of these four points : the destruction of the Queen's person ; the imprisonment of my Lord Keeper, my Lord of Leicester, Secretary Cecil ; the setting at liberty out of the Tower the Duke of Norfolk ; and the banishment of all strangers ; and it fell out in their examination that they would have imprisoned Sir Christopher Haydon and Sir William Butts, the Queen's Lieutenants. None of them could excuse themselves of any of the four points, saving Appleyard said he meant nothing towards the Queen's person ; for that he meant to have had them to a banquet, and to have betrayed them all, and to have won credit thereby with the Queen. Throgmorton was mute, and would say nothing till he was condemned, who then said, 'They are full merry now that will be as sorry within these few days.' Mr. Bell was attorney for Mr. Gerrard, he being one of the Judges, and Mr. Bell alleged against Appleyard that he was consenting to the treason before ; alleging one Parker's words, that was brought prisoner with Dr. Storey out of Flanders, that Parker heard of the treason before Nallard came over to the Duke of Alva. And there stood one Bacon by that heard Parker say so : my Lord offered a book to Bacon for to swear : 'O, my Lord,' said Appleyard, 'will you condemn me of his oath that is registered for a knave in the Book of Martyrs ?'

"They had set out a proclamation, and had four

prophecies ; one was touching the wantonness of the Court, and the other touching this land to be conquered by the Scots ; and two more that I cannot remember. There were many in trouble for speaking of seditious words. Thomas Cecil said that the Duke of Norfolk was not of that religion as he was accounted to be : and that his cousin Cecil was the Queen's darling, who was the cause of the Duke of Norfolk's imprisonment, with such like ; who is put off to the next assize. Anthony Middleton said, ' My Lord Morley is gone to set the Duke of Alva into Yarmouth, and if William Keat had not accused me, Throgmorton, and the rest we had had a hot harvest ; but if the Duke of Norfolk be alive, they all dare not put them to death.' Metcalf said that he would help the Duke of Alva into Yarmouth, and to wash his hands in the Protestants' blood. Marsham said that my Lord of Leicester had two children by the Queen : and for that he is condemned to lose both his ears, or else pay £100 presently. Chiplain said he hoped to see the Duke of Norfolk to be King before Michaelmas next, who doth interpret that he meant, not to be King of England, but to be King of Scotland.

"Mr. Bell and Mr. Solicitor said both to this effect to the prisoners—'What mad fellows were ye, being all rank Papists, to make the Duke of Norfolk your patron that is as good a Protestant as any is in England : and, being wicked traitors, to hope of his help to your wicked intents and purposes, that is as true and as faithful a subject as any that is in this land, saving only that the Queen is minded to imprison him for his contempt.' Doctor Storey is at Mr. Arch-deacon Watts' house, in custody, besides Powels.

Thurlby, late Bishop of Ely, died this last week at Lambeth.

“The Spanish Queen is arrived in the Low Countries, and will embark as soon as may be. The Emperor is setting forward his other daughter towards Metz to be married to the French King. It is written, by letters of the 28th of the last, from Venice, that the Turk has landed in Cyprus 100,000 men, or more, and has besieged two great cities within that kingdom, Nicocia and Famagosta. At one assault at Famagosta they lost 12,000 men ; upon the which repulse the Begler Bey of Natolia, the General of the Turk’s army, wrote to the great Turk, his master, that he thought it was invincible. He answered that, if they did not win it before they came, they should be put to the sword at their return home. The Turk has sent another army by land against the Venetians, into Dalmatia, and are besieging Zara with 20,000 footmen and 20,000 horsemen, and divers towns they have taken, as Spalator, Elisa, Eleba, and Nona, with great spoil and bloodshed : and it is written that the Turk’s several armies are above 200,000 men against the Venetians. The men first sent by the Venetians fell so into diseases by the way as they were fain to prepare new men, which is thought will hardly come to do any good in Cyprus. A man may see what account is to be made of these worldly things, as to see in a small time the third state of Christendom, in security, power, and wealth, to be in danger of utter overthrow in one year.

“They say my Lord of Leicester hath many workmen at Kenilworth to make his house strong, and doth furnish it with armour, ammunition, and all necessities for defence. And thus Jesus have my Lord, and your Lady-

ship, and my friends in his tuition, to God's pleasure.—
Scribbled at London, the last of August, 1570.

“Your good Ladyship's ever to command during life.

“To the right honourable Countess of Shrewsbury
at Chatsworth, or where.”

Life fell once more into its old groove. No large conspiracy could be feared yet, in spite of Elizabeth's postponement of Norfolk's execution. But there remained always the undercurrent of lesser “practices.” Earl and Lady had their hands always full with detective work of this kind. Priests and conjurers, pedlars, porters, and even schoolmasters formed the roll of suspects. Scouts were always at work following their movements, hanging about taverns to hear gossip which might betray their doings, and searchers were employed to pounce upon any scrap of written stuff which might prove valuable “copy.” Some of the most emphatic witnesses against Mary—her own letters of conspiracy—were actually found hidden under a stone on a bit of waste ground. The messenger charged with them durst not carry them further at that moment and before he could remove them they were discovered. It was about this time that she was given permission to take her airing further than the leads and to walk out in the open. The snow lay on the ground and soaked her to the ankles, but she bore it cheerfully, and one wonders if she had knowledge of those hidden letters and whether she nourished a wild hope of finding them in their niche and setting them safely on their way. Secret and sinister were the warnings which Earl and Lady shared in that long cold spring at Sheffield. All travellers from across the Border were duly catalogued by the northern

authorities and word passed from mouth to mouth of their appearance and activities. This was the sort of despatch which reached the castle: "A certain boy should come lately out of England with letters to the castle of Edinburgh and is to return back again within three or four days. . . . It were not amiss that my Lord of Shrewsbury had warning of him. His letters be secured in the buttons and seams of his coat. His coat is of black English frieze, he hath a cut on his left cheek, from his eye down, by the which he may be well known."

All the dodges of such envoys—from the stitching of letters into linings and the hiding of a written message under the setting of a jewel to the use of bags with double bottoms where despatches could be kept "safe from wet and fretting" and sight—were known to the Shrewsburys. An evening spent in the kitchens and guardroom, an hour or so of conference with my Lady would open to reader and writer alike a world of sensational gossip "palpitating with actuality." The captive Queen's precarious health was a constant subject of discussion. Shrewsbury's letters were bound to be full of it. Mary, who once more began to bombard Elizabeth with letters, suggested a trial of Buxton waters. She also busied herself anew with embroidery, contrived gifts for the Queen, and sent her a large consignment of French stuffs and silks. When packages of this kind arrived from France the Earl was always on the lookout. So careful was he in regard to his wife's share in such parcels that he would not let her receive and pay for such goods until he had first communicated the exact details of the transaction to his royal mistress.

Neither French taffetas nor little embroidered caps could alter the decision of the Privy Council and reverse

the position of the axe in regard to the Duke of Norfolk. His death took place in the glory of the early summer of 1572. Mary mourned and her health grew worse and worse. Yet, just when change was planned for her, and the castle had reached a condition almost too insanitary to endure, the news came of the massacre of St. Bartholomew. "These French tragedies and ending of unlucky marriage with blood and vile murders cannot be expressed with tongue to declare the cruelties. . . . These fires may be doubted that their flames may come both hither and into Scotland, for such cruelties have large scopes. . . . All men now cry out of your prisoner," wrote Burghley to the Earl under supreme agitation. To which the latter replies later, "These are to advertise you that the Queen remains still within these four walls, in safe keeping." The woods and wolds, he explains, are being scoured by his spies, and the number of the guard is increased by thirty. Clang of gate, clash of steel, roll of drum—the household music of the Shrewsburys knew nothing more harmonious than these noises. At stated intervals we hear the old burthen of sturdy self-vindication in such letters as the following to Burghley:—

"My very good Lord,

"I heartily thank your good Lordship for seeking to satisfy her Majesty in some doubts she might conceive of me and my wife, upon information given to her Majesty; your Lordship therein doeth the part of a faithful friend; so I have always trusted, and you shall receive no dishonour thereby. My services and fidelity to her Majesty are such as I am persuaded with assured hope that her Majesty, having proofs enough thereof, condemneth those who so untruly surmise,

against my wife first, and now myself, either of us undutiful dealing with this Queen or myself of any carelessness in regard my charge. As before I crave trial of whosoever is here noted of any indirect dealing with this Queen, so do I again require at your Lordship's hands to be amenable to her Majesty for due proof and punishment, as they merit, that her Majesty might be fully satisfied and quiet. And for my riding abroad sometimes (not far from my charge) in respect of my health only ; it has been well known to your Lordship from the first beginning of my charge, and it is true I always gave order first for safe keeping of her with a sure and stronger guard, both within my house and further off, than when myself was with her. I trusted none in my absence but those I had tried ; true and faithful servants unto me, and like subjects to her Majesty. I thank God my account of this weighty charge is ready, to her Majesty's contentation. No information nor surmise can make me shrink. Nevertheless, henceforth her Majesty's commandment for my continual attendance upon this lady shall be obeyed, as her Majesty shall not mislike thereof ; and even so, my Lord, I say to that part of your letters wherein a motion is made to me ; that (as in all my services hitherto) I had, nor seek, written contentment nor will, than shall stand her Majesty's pleasure or her best service. And so, wishing to your Lordship as well as to myself, I take my leave.

“ At Sheffield this 9th of December, 1572.

“ Your Lordship's ever-assured friend,

“ G. SHREWSBURY.

“ I have presumed to write to the Queen's Majesty to the same effect as to your Lordship.”

CHAPTER VII

FAMILY LETTERS

THE following letters carry on the story of the Shrewsburys in domestic and official detail for the next year. The second stepson of Bess was by this time not only a married man, but a member of Parliament and a courtier. He and his eldest stepbrother and brother-in-law, Henry Cavendish, represented their own county. His brother, Francis Talbot, the Earl's heir, who was also at Court, had been entrusted with diplomatic duties, and had already managed to get into mischief. Neither he nor Gilbert, who survived him, ever took such an important social or official position as that achieved by their father and stepmother. But in youth they were about the Court, and they held their parents in proper awe. Their occasional letters imply a strong sense of family duty and kinship in little things as in great. The first letter touches on a purely domestic matter. It is curious that, seeing his wife was his stepmother's eldest daughter, Gilbert should not have referred to the Countess for advice and approval.

"My Lord,—My brother told me of the letter your Lordship sent him for the putting away of Morgan and Marven; and said he rejoiced that your Lordship would so plainly direct and command him what to do, and he trusteth hereafter to please your Lordship in all his

doings; whereunto, according to my duty, I prayed him to have care above all manner of things, and advised him to keep secret your Lordship's directions.

"I have found out a sober maiden to wait on my wife, if it shall please your Lordship. She was servant unto Mrs. Southwell, now Lord Paget's wife, who is an evil husband, and will not suffer any that waited on his wife before he married her to continue with her. As it behoves me, I have been very inquisitive of the woman, and have heard very well of her behaviour; and truly I do repose in her to be very modest and well given, and such a one as I trust your Lordship shall not mislike; but if it be so that she shall not be thought meet for my wife, she will willingly repair hither again. Her name is Marget Butler; she is almost twenty-seven years old. Mr. Bateman¹ hath known her long, and thinketh very well of her: she is not very beautiful, but very cleanly in doing of anything chiefly about a sick body, to dress anything fit for them. I humbly pray your Lordship to send me word whether I shall make shift to send her down presently, for she is very desirous not to spend her time idly. Thus, most humbly desiring your Lordship's daily blessing, with my wonted and continual prayer for your Lordship's preservation in all honour and health, long to continue, I end.

"At the Court this Monday, the 25th of May, 1573.

"Your Lordship's most humble and obedient son,
"GILBERT TALBOT."

The next letter is largely given up to gossip, and places the Earl of Leicester, who constantly writes wise and appreciative letters to the Shrewsburys, in the gay,

¹ A servant of the Shrewsburys.



*Photo by Richard Keene, Ltd., Derby, from the picture at Hardwick Hall
By permission of his Grace the Duke of Devonshire*

GILBERT TALBOT, SEVENTH EARL OF SHREWSBURY

vivid light in which he is best known to posterity. It is exhaustive, and touches on all the reports the writer can gather as to public criticism of Shrewsbury as gaoler, besides making allusion to the Earl's financial difficulties.

“My most humble duty remembered, right honourable, my singular good Lord and father ; because of the convenience of the bearer hereof, I have thought good to advertise your Lordship of the estate of some here at the Court, as near as I have learned by my daily experience. My Lord Treasurer, even after the old manner, dealeth with matters of the State only, and beareth himself very uprightly. My Lord Leicester is very much with her Majesty, and she shows the same great, good affection that she was wont ; of late he has endeavoured to please her more than heretofore. There are two sisters now in the Court that are very far in love with him, as they have been long—my Lady Sheffield and Frances Howard ;¹ they (of like striving who shall love him better) are at great wars together, and the Queen thinketh not well of them and not the better of him ; by this means there are spies over him. My Lord of Sussex goes with the tide, and helps to back others ; but his own credit is sober, considering his estate ; he is very diligent in his office, and takes great pains. My Lord of Oxford is lately grown into great credit ; for the Queen's Majesty delighteth more in his personage and his dancing and valiantness than any other. I think Sussex doth back him all that he can ; if it were not for his fickle head he would pass any of them shortly. My Lady Burghley unwisely has declared herself, as it were, jealous, which is come to the

¹ Daughters of William, Lord Howard of Effingham.

Queen's ear ; whereat she has been not a little offended with her, but now she is reconciled again. At all these love matters my Lord Treasurer winketh, and will not meddle anyway. Hatton is sick still ; it is thought he will very hardly recover his disease, for it is doubted it is in his kidneys ; the Queen goeth almost every day to see how he doth. Now are there devices (chiefly by Leicester, as I suppose, and not without Burleigh's knowledge) to make Mr. Edward Dyer as great as ever was Hatton ; for now, in this time of Hatton's sickness, the time is convenient. It is brought thus to pass : Dyer lately was sick of a consumption, in great danger ; and, as your Lordship knows, he has been in displeasure these two years, it was made the Queen believe that his sickness came because of the continuance of her displeasure towards him, so that unless she would forgive him he was like not to recover, and hereupon her Majesty has forgiven him and sent unto him a very comfortable message ; now he is recovered again, and this is the beginning of the device. These things I learn of such young fellows as myself. Two days since Dr. Wilson told me he heard say that your Lordship, with your charge, was removed to Sheffield Lodge, and asked me whether it was so or not : I answered I heard so also ; that you were gone thither of force till the castle could be cleansed. And, further, he wished to know whether your Lordship did so by the consent of the Council, or not : I said I knew not that, but I was certain your Lordship did it on good ground. I earnestly desired him, of all friendship, to tell me whether he had heard anything to the contrary ; which he sware he never did, but asked because, he said, once that Lady should have been conveyed from that house. Then I told him

what great heed and care you had to her safe-keeping ; especially being there that good numbers of men, continually armed, watched her day and night, and both under her windows, over her chamber, and of every side her ; so that, unless she could transform herself to a flea or a mouse, it was impossible that she should escape. At that time Mr. Wilson showed me some part of the confession of one (but who he was, or when he did confess it, he would in no wise tell me), that that fellow should say he knew the Queen of Scots hated your Lordship deadly because of your religion, being an earnest Protestant ; and all the Talbots else in England, being all Papists, she esteemeth of them very well ; and this fellow did believe verily all we Talbots did love her better in our hearts than the Queen's Majesty : this Mr. Wilson said he showed me because I should see what knavery there is in some men to accuse. He charged me of all love that I should keep this secret, which I promised ; and, notwithstanding, considering he would not tell me who this fellow was, I willed a friend of mine, one Mr. Francis Southwell, who is very great with him, to know, amongst other talk, who he had last in examination ; and I understood that this was the examination of one at the last session of Parliament, and not since, but I cannot learn yet what he was. Mr. Walsingham is this day come hither to the Court ; it is thought he shall be made Secretary. Sir Thomas Smith and he both together shall exercise that office. He hath not yet told any news ; he hath had no time yet for being returned home ; as soon as I hear any your Lordship shall have them sent. Roulsden hath written to your Lordship as he saith, by this bearer ; he trusteth to your Lordship's satisfaction. I have been very im-

portunate of him for the present payment of his debt to your Lordship. He cannot anyways make shift for money unless he sell land, which he vows to do rather than to purchase your Lordship's displeasure. I have moved my Lord Treasurer two sundry times as your Lordship commanded me for the mustering within your Lordship's offices. The first time he willed me to come to him some other time, and he would give me an answer, because then he had to write to Berwick in haste ; this he told me before I half told him what I meant. The second time, which was on Saturday last, my Lord Leicester came unto him as I was talking ; but to-morrow, God willing, I will not fail to move him thoroughly. For other matters I leave your Lordship to the bearer himself. And so, most humbly desiring your Lordship's daily blessing, with my wonted prayer for the continuance of your Lordship's honour, and health long to continue, I end, this 11th of May, 1573.

“Your Lordship's most humble and obedient son,
“GILBERT TALBOT.”

This letter is packed with suggestions of Court intrigue. Hatton—afterwards Sir Christopher Hatton—it will be remembered, was one of the many young courtiers whose polish, culture, and elegant dancing excited Elizabeth's romantic interest. He rose from the post of Gentleman of the Privy Chamber to the captaincy of the Guard, and, by way of the successive posts of Vice-Chamberlain and Privy Councillor, reached the Chancellorship and received a Garter.

Edward Dyer, Hatton's rival, matched him to some extent in honours, for he too was subsequently

knighted and invested with the Garter. As for the Dr. Wilson named, he afterwards became a Secretary of State, while the Earl of Oxford, who is shown as trying to outdo all other courtiers in favour, was a son-in-law of Lord Burghley. He was an adherent of the fifth Duke of Norfolk, and when Burghley refused to intercede for the Duke's life, the Earl vowed that he would revenge himself on his father-in-law by destroying the happiness of his daughter. This he achieved satisfactorily, and when she died of a broken heart he finished his work of destruction by dissipating the whole of his fortune. The jealousy of "my Lady Burghley," named in the above letter, evidently refers to the torture which his wife suffered while he was paying addresses to the Queen.

In the midst of this motley Court group one discerns the figure of Burghley himself, a pillar of discretion, while unable to shield his own daughter from distress and scandal.

We see that the Earl of Leicester was a person to be cultivated so long as his love affairs did not incur the Queen's anger, and so long, in fact, as the love-making was not on his side. It must have been with a chuckle of satisfaction that the Earl received a letter from the favourite about this time, in which he specially commends the behaviour of the young Talbots and records the Queen's high approval of them. All this was very soothing to their parents. The political situation was less acute. Many traitors were dead, and the banner of Mary of Scotland lay in the dust. Her chief stronghold had fallen. France was in very bad odour, though the memory of the horror of the Bartholomew Massacre was beginning to fade from English minds. Spain had

enough to do with her affairs in the Netherlands. Elizabeth could afford to dance, practise on the virginals, play off one of her Court lovers against another, and invent nicknames for them. Domestic happiness and a merrier aspect of things came also nearer to the Talbots. My Lady absented herself for a while, and the Earl writes to her as of old like a lover, and tells her of his dangers and longings :—

“My dear none,—Of all joys I have under God the greatest is yourself: to think that I possess so faithful, and one that I know loves me so dearly, is all and the greatest comfort that this earth can give. Therefore God give me grace to be thankful to Him for His goodness showed unto me, a vile sinner.

“And where you advise in your letter you willed me to . . .¹ which I did that I should not be . . .¹ to this lady nothing of the matter: my stomach was so full, I asked her in quick manner, where she writ any letters to any her friends that I would stand in her title. She affirms in her honour she hath not. But howsoever it is she hath written therein, I may safely answer I make small account thereof.

“I thank you, my sweetheart, that you are so willing to come when I will. Therefore, dear heart, send me word how I might send for you; and till I have your company I shall think long, my only joy: and therefore appoint a day, and in the meantime I shall content me with your will, and long daily for your coming. I your letters study very well; and I like them so well they could not be amended: and I have sent them up to Gilbert. I have written to him how

¹ Blank in the MS.

happy he is to have such a mother as you are. Farewell, only joy. This Tuesday evening.

“Your faithful one,

“To my wife.”¹

“G. SHREWSBURY.

The next letter, from one of her own boys, is one which Bess evidently sent on to her “juwell” of a husband :—

Henry Cavendish to the Countess of Shrewsbury.

“May it please your honour, I thought it good to let your La. understand of a misfortune that happened in my house. On Thursday night last at supper two of my men fell out about some trifling words, and to all their fellows’ judgment that heard their jangling we made good friends again, and went and lay together that night, for they had been bedfellows of long before, and loved one another very well, as everybody took it in the house. On Friday morning, very early, by break of day, they went forth, by name Swenerto and Langeford, with two swords apiece, as the sequel after showed ; and in the fields fought together, and in fight Swenerto slew Langeford, to my great grief both for the sudden death of the one and for the utter destruction of the other, whom I loved very well. Good Madam, let it not trouble you anything ; we are mortal, and born to many and strange adventures ; and therefore must temper our minds to bear such burdens as shall be by God laid on our shoulders. My greatest grief, and so I judge it will be some trouble to your La. that it should happen in my house. Alas ! mada, what could I do with it : altogether right

¹ Hunter’s *Hallamshire*.

sorrowful for it, and it hath troubled and vexed me, more than in reason it should have done a wise man. I would to God I could forget that there never had been any such matter. Upon the fight done I sent for Mr. Adderley, and used his counsel in all things. Swenerto fled presently and is pursued, but not yet heard of. Thus humbly craving your La. daily blessing I end, more than sad to trouble your La. thus long with this sorrowful matter. Tut: this present Saturday.

“Your La. most bounden, humble, and obedient son,

“To my lady.

“HENRY CAVENDISH.

“Return this.”

“My ‘juwell,’ this Saturday at night I received this letter, much to my grief for the mishap. Yet was ever like that Swenerto should commit some great fault; he was a vain, lewd fellow. Farewell, my dear heart.

“Your faithful wife,

“E. SHREWSBURY.”

The Earl writes again, impatient for his wife's return :—

“My dear none,—I see how careful you are of my health, which if I were sick would relieve me again. I received a letter from Gilbert sent by Nykle Clark. You may see the time approaching near that a new alarm will be given me. When you have read his letter I pray you to write to me again, for I mind of Monday to write by Antony Barlow; he will be glad of the pursuivantship if he can get it: he shall have my good will therein. If you will write up . . . he may

safely deliver it, therefore I pray you fail not, but send me your advice concerning this matter. Farewell, my only joy. This Saturday I pray you keep promise; you said you would be with me within a fortnight at the furthest; therefore let me hear from you when I shall send for your horses, my sweetheart.

“Your faithful husband and assured,
“G. SHREWSBURY.”

At the beginning of the year following, 1574, the Earl indites a very touching and dignified little New Year letter to the son in whom he always seems to take the most interest—Gilbert :—

“I have received your letter of New Year’s Eve, and this New Year’s day I begin to use my pen first to yourself wishing you to use yourself this New Year and many years after to God’s glory and fear of Him, and to live in that credit your ancestors have hitherto done, and so doing, as I hope you will, be faithful, loyal, and serviceable to the Queen’s Majesty, my Sovereign, who to me, under God, is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Your New Year’s gift shall be I will supply all your needful wants; and so long as I see that carefulness, duty, and love you bear me which hitherto I see in you, my purse and all that I have shall be as free to you as to myself.¹ Time is so short and I have so many come to me with New Year’s gifts I can write no more, but thank you for your perfumed doublet you sent me: and so praying God to bless you.

“Sheffield Castle this New Year’s Day 1574.

“Your loving father,
“G. SHREWSBURY.”

¹ In the light of after events this is a somewhat rash offer!

The whole tone of the letter is one of domestic security, and one has a vivid glimpse of the New Year celebrations and the flow of gifts. These *étrennes* were important affairs. A good courtier always paid this dole to his queen under the guise of a handsome gift, while the nobles and country gentry in their turn were the recipients from their tenants and friends of heterogeneous articles varying from capons, wine, and food-stuffs to gloves, clothes, or furniture.

No one in that great and rich family group, so full of promise, had any notion of the events which would call down upon the Countess the wrath of the Queen, or the fresh accusations which would be hurled against the Earl.

Life just now was as easy as Shrewsbury could ever hope to find it. He had managed to satisfy his prisoner and give her plenty of change. She was in the autumn of 1573 transferred to Chatsworth, *en route* for Buxton. Ultimately, by dint of scouring the place of strangers and preventing access to the springs of any save specified persons—a thing the more easy of accomplishment since the waters were the property of Shrewsbury's family—it was made possible to give her five weeks here. After this came a stay at Chatsworth and then the return to Sheffield.

Freedom from outside attacks did not last very long. Before the spring had fairly set in Elizabeth and Burghley were once more on the warpath against the Shrewsburys. Never was George Talbot sure of his Queen's trust. It must be remembered here that at the close of 1572 she had deliberately written thus by Burghley: "The Queen's Majesty has in very good part accepted your last letter to herself, and has willed me to ascer-

tain your Lordship that she doth no wise alter her former good opinion of your approved fidelity and of the care you have of such service as is committed to you, the same being such as none can in her land compare with the trust committed to your Lordship, and yet she would have your Lordship, as she says, not to mislike that when she hath occasion to doubt or fear foreign practices reaching hither into her realm, even to the charge which your Lordship hath, she do warn you thereof; and, in so doing, not to imagine that she findeth such informations to proceed from any mistrust that she hath of your Lordship, no more than she would have if you were her son or brother. This she wills me to write effectually to your Lordship . . . with my most hearty commendations to your Lordship and my good Lady."

In spite of this the least thing afforded Elizabeth an excuse for a nagging letter to Sheffield Castle. On this occasion the matter was innocent enough. Gilbert's young wife expected her first child, and it was not surprising that my Lord and Lady should prefer that the event should take place under their roof. Yet the Queen thought it necessary to worry them with mistrust, forcibly expressed. Shrewsbury replies to Burghley: "The mislike her Majesty . . . of my son Gilbert's wife brought to bed in my house, as cause of women and strangers repair hither, makes me heartily sorry; nevertheless, the midwife excepted, none such have, or do at any time, come within her sight; and at the first, to avoid such resort, I myself with two of my children christened the child. What intelligence passeth for this Queen to and from my house I do not know; but trust her Majesty shall find my service while I live both true

and faithful. Yet be you assured, my Lord, this lady will not stay to put in practice, or make enquiry by all means she can devise, and ask me no leave, so long as such access of her people is permitted unto her. . . . My Lord, where there hath been often bruits of this Lady's escape from me, the 26th of February last there came an earthquake, which so sunk chiefly her chamber as I doubted more her falling than her going, she was so afraid. But God be thanked she is forthcoming, and grant it may be a forewarning unto her. It hath been at the same time in sundry places. No hurt was done and the same continued a very small time. God grant us all grace to fear Him."

That the very Derbyshire ground which bore him should fail his feet while his Queen's faith in him fell away seems adding insult to injury. For some time past he appears to have been torn between the longing to rid himself of a now intolerable responsibility and the fear of misconstruction to which his retirement from his post would expose him. "The truth is, my good Lord," as he is driven at last to say to Burghley, "if it so stand with the Queen Majesty's pleasure I could be right well contented to be discharged . . . and think myself therewith most happy, if I could see how the same might be without any blemish to my honour and estimation." He begs that Burghley "will have respect that such consideration may be had of my service as shall make it manifest to the world how well her Majesty accepteth the same. My Lord Scroop, and others, were not unconsidered of for their short time of service." And so in this condition of mind he waits for Burghley's advice. He would have done better to risk the Queen's displeasure and to lay down his gaoler's

warrant on the plea of illness, even if in those days medical certificates were not so easy to procure and might not have been so potent. As for disfavour at Court, he could, as a strong and powerful private gentleman, take up his stand and keep up his vast property, though Elizabeth might wreak her annoyance on the young Cavendishes and Talbots. Had he summed up the courage to decide the matter after his own heart he would have lost nothing in the world's esteem, been far better off in pocket, and possibly the barque of the Shrewsburys would have escaped the shoals and rocks of domestic bickerings, which in later middle-life led to such woeful wreckage of the vessel and the magnificent family crew.

George Talbot did not foresee all this. He was not an imaginative man. He was a typical Government official, precise, sententious, cautious, faithful, anxious, hypersensitive. One imagines that his countess—who was not in the least *au fond* the typical discreet wife of a high official—spent a good deal of time goading him to revolt. He has admitted in a previous letter that she was not at all anxious for him to continue with his present duties. Of course, it was the business of Burghley to keep him at them. Shrewsbury was the most useful of all English nobles in this respect. All the conditions about him suited the Queen's purposes in every way. The way in which she and Burghley put him off with fair promises and bamboozled him with vague promises of reward makes one gasp. As to current outlay—the £52 per week allowed him for this by the Council was far too little—one of the most ingenious suggestions Elizabeth ever made was that Mary should “defray her own charges with her dowry

of France." Shrewsbury adds: "She seemed not to dislike thereof at all, but rather desirous . . . so she asked me in what sort and with what manner of liberty she should be permitted to same." He urges that these details should be settled at once. "Assure yourself if the liberty and manner thereof content her as well as the motion, she will easily assent to it; and so I wish it, as may be without peril otherwise; and for the charges in safe-keeping her, I have found them greater many ways than some have accounted for, and than I have made show of, or grieved at; for in service of her Majesty I can think my whole patrimony well bestowed."

How the wary official, loyal and somewhat crushed, speaks in that last sentence! How irritating to his Bess with her superabundant business instinct and her ambitions for her family! He was ever on the watch, his conscience agog. She was continually "on the make," seeking the quickest road to family aggrandisement which was compatible with decency.

The following letter belongs to this period, and shows Gilbert Talbot back in London. He had been previously there in communication with Court officials apropos of the accusations brought originally against his father and subsequently against himself by an ex-chaplain of the Earl, named Corker, in combination with another priest called Haworth. The letter roused the whole family. The Earl literally lashes out. It remains as the chief evidence of the first published imputations against the Earl's honour. It evidently embodies the attitude of wife as well as husband. This is a very important point because of the dissension which arose later on this very question.

*“To the right honourable my very good Lord,
my Lord Burghley, Lord Treasurer of England.*

“Your Lordship’s friendly letters I accept in as friendly ways as I know to be meant to me. For Corker’s proceedings against my son Gilbert, I partly understand of his false accusation ; which, in my conscience, is utterly untrue and thereupon I dare gage my life. The reprobate’s beginning was against me and now turned to Gilbert. His wicked speeches of me cannot be hid ; I have them of his own hand, cast abroad in London, and bruited throughout this realm, and known to her Majesty’s Council. Her Majesty hath not heard of him ill of me, so it pleaseth her Majesty to signify unto me by her own gracious letters, which I must believe, notwithstanding his dealing against me is otherwise so notoriously known that if he escape sharp and open punishment dishonour will redound to me. This practice hath a further meaning than the varlets know of. . . . For mine own part I have never thought to allow any title, nor will, otherwise than as shall please her Majesty to appoint. . . . How can it be supposed that I should be disposed to favour this Queen for her claim to succeed the Queen’s Majesty ? My dealing towards her hath shown the contrary. I know her to be a Stranger, a Papist, and my enemy ; what hope can I have of good of her, either for me or my country ? I see I am by my own friends brought in jealousy, wherefore I wish with all my heart that I were honourably read, without note or blemish, to the world of any want in me.”

Though the Earl’s enemy was satisfactorily con-

demned to the pillory and the Fleet, the scandal proved many-headed, and again the poor official (accused, among other things, of being as much of a credulous fool as a knave in regard to Mary of Scotland) thunders protest.

“Wherefore as touching that lewd fellow, who hath not only sought by unlawful libels extant, so much as in him lay, to deface my dutiful heart and loyalty, but also the rooting up of my house, utter overthrow and destruction of my lineal posterity, I neither hold him a subject nor yet account him worthy the name of a man, which with a watery submission can appease so rigorous a storm;¹ no, if loss of my life, which he hath pretended would have fully contented him, I could better have been satisfied than with these, his unspeakable vilenesses. . . . I might be thought hard-hearted if, for Christianity’s sake, I should not freely forgive as cause shall require, and desire God to make him a better member, being so perilous a caterpillar in the Commonwealth. For I have not the man anywise in contempt, it is his iniquity and Judas dealing that I only hate.”

In other words, “Reptile! But I forgive thee.” It is almost a parallel to the anecdote of a certain little girl with an over-stern nurse of gloomy religious tendencies, to whom the child, waking alone in the dark, called, “Nurse, nurse, come, come! I dreamed that the devil was here tempting me to call you a duffer—but *I resisted the temptation!*”

¹ Corker had apparently eaten his words in a whining counter statement.

The Corker affair, of course, provided fresh food for the imaginings and reports of Mary's adversaries. People thought that it would necessarily mean the removal of Mary into fresh custody. Mary herself dreaded this. She did not love Shrewsbury, but she believed her life to be safe with him, though she may not have entirely trusted his wife. She heard that poison was to be used against her, and that there was a suggestion at Court "to make overtures to the Countess of Shrewsbury." She was assured that if anyone poisoned her without Elizabeth's knowledge, the latter "would be very much obliged to them for relieving her of so great a trouble."

There is nothing on the Countess's side to corroborate this wild statement. This horrible fear, however, was so implanted in Mary's mind that she sent to France for "some genuine terra sigillata, as antidote." But she did not apply to her sinister mother-in-law Catherine De Medici. "Ask M. the Cardinal my uncle," she writes, "or if he has none, rather than have recourse to the Queen my mother-in-law, or to the King, send a bit of fine unicorn's horn, as I am in great want of it."

The year 1574 travelled onward without realisation of her fears. The "caterpillar," Corker, had not prevailed in the overthrow of the Earl's house or of his "lineal posterity," and Gilbert Talbot in this little note writes affectionately enough to his stepmother :—¹

"My most humble duty remembered unto your good Ladyship, to fulfil your La. commandment, and in discharge of my duty by writing, rather than for any

¹ Hunter's *Hallamshire*.

matter of importance that I can learn, I herewith trouble your La. Her Majesty stirreth little abroad, and since the stay of the navy to sea here hath been all things very quiet. . . . I have written to my Lord of the bruit which is here of his being sick again, which I nothing doubt but it is utterly untrue: howbeit, because I never heard from my L. nor your La. since I came up, I cannot choose but be somewhat troubled, and yet I consider the like hath been often reported most falsely and without cause, as I beseech God this be. My Lady Cobbam asketh daily how your La. doth, and yesterday prayed me, the next time I wrote, to do her very hearty commendation unto your La., saying openly she remaineth unto your La. as she was wont, as unto her dearest friend. My La. Lenox hath not been at the Court since I came. On Wednesday next I trust (God willing) to go hence towards Goodrich; and shortly after to be at Sheffield. And so most humbly craving your La. blessing with my wonted prayer, for your honour and most perfect health long to continue. From the Court at Greenwich this 27th June, 1573.

“Your La. most humble and obedient son,

“To my Lady.

“GILBERT TALBOT.

“I received a letter from my Lord since this letter was sealed, and then I had no time by this messenger to write again unto your La. which came in a comfortable season unto me.”

CHAPTER VIII

A CERTAIN JOURNEY

IT was now the autumn of the year 1574. The Shrewsburys had for the time being come triumphantly out of official complications, and despite their grave responsibilities lived as comfortably as might be, though they were often separated, because the wife, at any rate, had other duties besides that of gaolership. What social life was permitted to them by the restraint entailed by this charge could obviously be enjoyed only by the Countess, and even she must have found it difficult to meet her cronies, get her children married and provided for, and keep a firm hand on domestic expenditure at the various houses she owned. The guarding of Mary of Scotland certainly had its interesting, romantic side, and this to some extent was a set-off against the greyer side of the business and its financial disadvantages. Just now the chances of Mary were at their lowest. Bothwell was dying in exile,¹ the Duke of Norfolk had shed his blood vainly for her, Charles Darnley, "The Young Fool," as Mr. Lang most justly calls him, though dead, with all his vanity, treachery, and vice, could still harm her cause, more latterly perhaps through the popular stigma which attached to her than by the hatred of his relatives, the

¹ His death took place in 1575, but Mary did not hear of it till a year later.

family of Lennox. His family, sorely chastened by Elizabeth for his marriage with Mary, was, since his death, held in less odium at the English Court, though it did not suit the Queen's gracious meanness to raise it out of poverty. Elizabeth and Darnley's mother, poor soul—Countess of Lennox, *née* the Lady Margaret Douglas—had buried the hatchet after the boy's death. For the benefit of those who forget her story—or ignore it—a word as to this lady:—

The daughter of Queen Margaret of Scotland (a Tudor, and sister of Henry VIII) and of the Earl of Angus, a mere boy, she was born in a wild moment of flight over the border into England. The very castle into which her mother crept after the long journey on horseback was immediately besieged. Thereafter the child Margaret became a bone of contention between her divorced parents—as history tells. After three years of babyhood in the shelter of her royal uncle's English Court she spent her youth in France and Scotland, often latterly a wanderer from castle to castle, abhorred by her mother the Scots Queen because of her devotion to her outlawed father. For years she had neither house nor pin-money, but was dependent always upon such hospitality and shelter as her father's friends would yield her in their Northern fortresses. Though her mother never forgave her for her defection, the fortunes of the girl—beautiful and of imposing personality—mended and brought her at last into the sunshine of Tudor favours. Henry VIII had compassion on his niece and made her playmate of Princess Mary, at which time she so won his affections that he settled an annuity upon her and her father. Subsequently she was first lady-in-waiting to Anne Boleyn,



From a contemporary picture

LADY MARGARET DOUGLAS, COUNTESS OF LENNOX

MOTHER OF LORD DARNLEY

and was installed as one of the household of the baby Princess Elizabeth. While Katherine of Aragon was being divorced and the star of Anne Boleyn waxed and waned she witnessed strange moments, and watched the violent changes by which her uncle declared now this one and now that one of his daughters illegitimate. Her own fortunes, even as a princess of the blood royal, were—in spite of her uncle's genial expressions—nothing too secure, and marriage and a dowry were still dreams of the future. Possibly the King's erotic irregularities allowed him no time for the love affairs of others, but at any rate he manifestly did not, like some of his successors, intend to doom his lady wards to perpetual virginity. When Lady Margaret showed favour to Lord Thomas Howard, kinsman of the Queen (Boleyn), Henry seemed to have winked at the courtship. So soon, however, as he killed his second consort and degraded her baby girl to the ranks of the illegitimate, matters assumed a very different colour. For the Lady Margaret Douglas was now the nearest heir to the throne. He married immediately, but no heir was speedily born. Meanwhile the Lady Margaret's love affair grew and culminated in a formal if secret contract—that is to say a solemn betrothal, in every respect binding. Henry regarded this as a double offence. His blood niece, his heir apparent, had contracted herself without his permission; moreover she had pledged herself to a near relative of the abhorred Boleyn. He behaved in his proper, kingly, melodramatic way, sent man and maid to the Tower, speedily convicted them of high treason, and sentence of death followed. The execution of this, as usual, was delayed. The State document condemning both

is, as all the world knows, one of the most disgracefully illegal concoctions ever produced by the blundering rage of a ruler and the hypocrisy of his ministers. In addition it furnished the precedent for the gross interference of that ruler's daughter, Elizabeth, in like cases. In addition to proving the Lady Margaret guilty of treason, it professed to prove her illegitimacy also, and so cleared the way for Henry's future whims. The unhappy Lord Thomas, after a year or two, succumbed to close confinement and sorrow and died in the Tower. His lady was removed to Sion House Court, near London, one of the few religious houses upon which her uncle found it convenient to smile because it could play a most useful part in his affairs as a polite place of detention for ladies of quality who drooped under his displeasure. The birth of his prince—Edward VI—made him relent towards his niece, and she came about the Court once more, though her old penchant for the house of Howard, of which a second member—nephew of her betrothed—now wooed her, thrust her into shadow again. This was probably a harder blow than the first, though she was not this time shivering under the fear of the axe. For she had been fully restored to her old place; she had once more taken part in that melodramatic domestic merry-go-round of Henry's consorts. She was first lady to the new royal Anne of Cleves, she had apartments assigned to her at Hampton Court, and she was "first lady" again to Anne's successor, Katherine Howard. A weary period of detention at Sion House followed—sharply ended because the King now wished to shut up Katherine Howard there. So Lady Margaret was moved on

to the care of the Duke of Norfolk on the East coast. The third Katherine whom Henry wooed—the widowed Parr—put an end to this banishment, and by her tact and kindness reconciliations took place all round in the royal house. Lady Margaret played bridesmaid and lady-in-waiting once more, and her uncle began to bestir himself about her marriage. The man she wedded at the age of thirty-two after so much tossing and chasing, imprisonment and poverty, was the very Matthew, Earl of Lennox, whose claim to the Scots Crown had by James V of Scotland, on the death of his two sons, been preferred against those of the Earl of Arran. Both earls were kinsmen of James, and because of their high ambitions were engaged in undying feud. The birth of a royal Scots heir, in Mary, reduced both lords to the same level, but did not diminish the pertinacity of Lennox, who returned from France to England with the design of wedding Mary's mother, Mary of Lorraine, as soon as her widowhood pointed her out as eligible. He was a handsome fellow and perfected in the graces of courts after his long apprenticeship in France, but he did not have his way, and emissaries from England schemed to throw Lady Margaret Douglas in his path. England was eager that he should serve her purposes. As consort of Mary of Lorraine and financed by France he would be the worst enemy of England. With Lady Margaret England dangled before him a good dowry. The marriage, adorned by the blessing of Henry VIII, took place with great *éclat* in 1544, and the King flourished his sanction in a speech including the important declaration, "in case his own issue failed he should be right glad if heirs of her body succeeded

to the crown." Nevertheless, though her husband was promised the regency of Scotland, and she was awarded residence in a royal palace (Stepney), she did not retain the King's favour. Quarrels ensued; whether brewed by the spies in her own household in London or in Yorkshire (where she established herself in order to be nearer her husband, engaged in Border invasions), or by her act does not appear. Just before Henry died the breach was complete, and in spite of her having given birth to three legitimate Tudor heirs, of whom Henry Darnley was the second, her rights and those of her offspring from the regal succession in England were wiped out.

With a strength, as of Antæus, the much-buffed lady overrode trouble and travelled to London with her child Henry, now the eldest (her first-born died in infancy), to pay her respects to her cousin, the new King, Edward VI. How she faced the situation is a marvel. Her husband's Border cruelties had made him unpopular, and she was coldly looked upon. Her position for some years was most equivocal, since, in spite of her close relationship to the queen dowager of Scotland, she could not present to this lady, her sister-in-law, her husband Earl Lennox, traitor to Scotland, or her sons, in whom the Tudor blood was tainted by that of Lennox. She lived, however, in stately fashion in Yorkshire, followed eagerly the ritual of the Romish Church, and educated her children in it. Quarrels with her father Angus, discussions as to the disposal of his property, the birth of her eighth child, and the impaired health of her lord engrossed her now sufficiently. Then came another subtle and sudden change of fortunes with the death of Edward VI,

the abortive scheme on behalf of Lady Jane Grey, and the sudden triumph of the claims of Princess Mary over those of her younger sister Elizabeth.

During the reign of Mary of England Lady Lennox passed into calmer waters. She did not abuse her opportunities, but the Queen's favour did not make Margaret or her children heirs designate to Mary's crown.

Exit Mary, enter Elizabeth, and with Elizabeth a short time of prosperity! Matthew Lennox secured eventually his regency in Scotland, and his wife was in waiting upon Elizabeth at Windsor. She must have felt like a bat emerging from a cellar after the constant misfortunes and rebuffs of the past. Disfavour, dispeace were, however, always her portion, and very soon closed in upon her. This time the occasion of disturbance was France. Its king died. Mary of Scotland became queen consort. Lady Lennox saw a rich chance of using influence so puissant for reinstating her husband and herself in Scotland. She sent one messenger of congratulation and again another. This seems to have been Henry Darnley, now her eldest son, who was just fifteen. Thus did she begin to lay the train of circumstances which exploded in the horrors of the night of Kirk-o'-Field. From this till the actual Darnley marriage it was the Lady Lennox even more than her husband who invited intrigue. She, like other keen aristocratic plotters of the day, employed not only codes, emissaries, and spies, but conjurors. Little she guessed at the eavesdroppers who lurked in the corners of her great house at Settrington, and of the spies whom the Earl of Leicester and Lord Burghley employed to catch every suspicious word and record every private

interview within her walls. One fine day the Queen's officers invaded and seized her household, conjurors included, and she and her family were summoned sharply to Court. A sorry journey that, though not the first piece of pitiful travelling she had done. Servants, children, lord and lady reached the capital, and were disposed of in various quarters. The Lennoxes were ordered to their own apartments in Westminster Palace, while some of their retinue were put into the old Gate House prison close by. How young Lord Darnley managed to evade watching and quietly lose himself in London is a mystery. This did not make things easier for his parents, who were instantly punished by separation and imprisonment, he in the Tower, and she to strait keeping under the roof of Sir Richard and Lady Sackville, the Queen's cousins, at Sheen. Lady Lennox's religion and the unjust suggestion that she had been responsible for the harsh treatment, by the late Queen, of her sister Elizabeth, seemed to aggravate the case of both prisoners. After sickness, pleadings, and indignation, husband and wife were permitted to share confinement at Sheen. It would have been best for them if they had been kept there indefinitely. How Elizabeth ever came to free them in the midst of her suspicions and fears in regard to the marriage of Mary of Scotland is extraordinary. That she should actually have been prevailed upon to give the Earl and his eldest son a passport into Scotland is still more so. With the Darnley marriage began Lady Lennox's long incarceration in the Tower itself—a more pitiful imprisonment than any she had experienced. Her children were far from her; her husband and eldest son were too wise to risk their fate by obeying Elizabeth's absurd

order to return to Court. Freedom came hand in hand with the terrible news of Darnley's murder. What could the woman do but break forth into loud complaints and passionate accusation in the royal presence? Was it strange that, worn with imprisonment, the beauty of her prime gone, her face disfigured with many sorrows, her dignity and royal blood degraded, she should address a petition begging the Queen to commit Mary to trial and secure the speedy execution of justice? Elizabeth would not have her hand forced. "It was not becoming," said she, "to fix a charge so heinous upon the princess and her kinswoman without producing the clearest evidence." She would not actually accuse, but she would not clear her enemy.

Thus there was reason enough for Elizabeth's later clemency towards the Lennoxes. It suited the purpose of queen and prisoner that they should now join issue against the murderess, "the hure," against "Bothwell's wench." It suited Lennox well that he should be installed guardian of the future James I, and Lady Lennox, as his grandmother, was now accorded a far more important position than she could have taken had her daughter-in-law been above suspicion. It is true that financially she was never unembarrassed. A mansion at Hackney, formerly the property of the ruined family of Percy, was awarded to her as a residence, but it does not seem to have been much of a home, or at least, her manner of living there seems to have been anything but luxurious. She does not appear to have been much at Court. Gilbert Talbot alludes to her in a letter already quoted, and written in this summer of 1574: "My Lady of Lennox hath not been at the Court since I came." Up to the present her attitude towards Mary

was unchanged. When Lord and Lady Burghley visited Chatsworth in 1570, Margaret Lennox thought it necessary to flog a dead horse and add by letter her exhortations to the warnings of Elizabeth that Mr. Secretary should be on his guard against the wiles of Mary. Even Margaret—a woman—knew the force of the personal equation in this case. She is careful to add: "Not for any fear you should be won, which as her Majesty tells me she did speak to you at your departing, but to let you understand how her Majesty hath had some talks with me touching my Lord. . . . Her Majesty says that Queen works many ways—I answered her Majesty was a good lady to her and better I thought than any other prince would have been if they were in her case, for she staid publishing abroad her wickedness which was manifestly known." In the self-same summer from Chatsworth Mary, the daughter-in-law, writes to her. The content and tone of the letters is pitiful enough.

"Madame,—If the wrong and false reports of enemies well known as traitors to you, alas! too much trusted by me, by your advice, had not so far stirred you against my innocence (and I must say against all kindness) that you have not only as it were condemned me wrongfully, but cherished, as your words and deeds have testified to all the world, a manifest misliking against your own blood, I would not have omitted this long ago duty in writing to you, excusing me for those untrue reports made of me, but hoping with God's grace and time to have my innocence confirmed, as I trust it is already, even to the most indifferent persons. I thought best not to trouble you for a time till now another matter is moved that toucheth us both,

which is the transporting of your little son, and my only child, to the which I were never so willing, yet I would be glad to have your advice therein, as in all other things touching him. I have borne him, and God knoweth with what danger to him and to me, and of you he is descended. So I mean not to forget my duty to you in showing therein any unkindness to you notwithstanding how unkindly you have dealt with me, but will love you as my aunt and respect you as my mother-in-law. And if it please you to know further of my mind, in that and all things betwixt us, my ambassador, the Bishop of Ross, shall be ready to confer with you.

“And so after my hearty commendations, remitting you to the said ambassador and your better consideration, I commit you to the protection of Almighty God, whom I pray to preserve you, and my brother Charles, and cause you to know my part better than you do—By your loving daughter-in-law.

“(To my Lady Lennox, my mother-in-law.)”¹

This letter was delivered to Lady Lennox in the Queen's presence some months after it was written, and Elizabeth was still at work defaming the writer to her mother-in-law. That was during the close of 1570. In 1574 their relations were in no wise altered. Lady Lennox evidently still believed her son's wife guilty, while she pathetically insisted upon her rights as the grandmother of a king. In this capacity she applied to the Queen for a safe-conduct to her northern house of Settrington—now restored to her—whither she wished to repair with her son Charles because she had been informed of a plot to carry off her royal grandson and

¹ Leader, *Mary Queen of Scots in Captivity*,

bring him to England. This seems to have been a rather well-worn excuse and was mistrusted by Elizabeth, who about this time began to entertain doubts of her lady's real attitude towards the imprisoned "dowager of Scotland." She and Lady Shrewsbury were old acquaintances at Court. The latter heard of the projected long journey, and invited the party to break it at one of the Shrewsbury "places." Chatsworth offered itself as most suitable, but she was right in her surmise that this choice would only appear in a suspicious light to Elizabeth, who anticipated it in the admonition she bestowed on Lady Lennox before her departure. Her Ladyship showed a fine indignation at such a suggestion, but one wonders whether this was not merely a piece of "bluff," for the complicity of Mary had been repeatedly denied by Bothwell and by other Scottish lords implicated in the dark business at Kirk-o'-Field. At any rate this northern journey gave colour to all kinds of imputations. It was suggested that Lady Lennox's ultimate aim was simply a visit of tender enquiry and that she was bound actually for Scotland to assure herself of the welfare of the boy James. It was thought, again, that she herself would kidnap the child and bring him into England for her own purposes or for those of her daughter-in-law. At all events she had her way and started. Lady Shrewsbury also knew that Chatsworth was much too near Sheffield Castle to allow of the reception of this guest without literally disobeying orders from Court. She decided, therefore, upon Rufford Abbey as the most suitable place. Unhappily the scheme which lay behind this hospitality has not descended to posterity in the form of letters. But gradually the motives underlying the invitation show

themselves clearly enough. Lady Shrewsbury had still one unmarried daughter for whom she was exerting herself to find a good match. She had her eye upon a certain young Bertie, a son of the Duchess of Suffolk by a second marriage. This affair could not be accomplished, and she therefore worked upon the Duchess's sympathy so as to secure her co-operation in a new direction. Lady Lennox and her son Charles on their journey halted first at the gates of the Duchess's house. Six miles away was Rufford, where Lady Shrewsbury had taken her daughter and made all ready for goodly entertainment. To the Duchess's house she sent a messenger, and backed up the invitation by a personal visit. Lady Lennox accepted the invitation, and with her son, coach, baggage-carts, mules, and attendants arrived at the Abbey. Previous to this there must surely have taken place an interesting three-cornered interview between the three great ladies. Though the Duchess of Suffolk may have been genuinely interested in helping to find a husband for wistful young Elizabeth Cavendish, one cannot acquit her of a certain malice. Her part in the transaction wears a very innocent air. Nothing happened under her roof for which she could be called to book by the Queen. At the same time she was a hot Protestant and could not have felt any very great sympathy for the Lady Lennox, nor for Lady Shrewsbury, who, as regards mere creed, must always have been a religious opportunist.

At Rufford Lady Lennox fell ill. There was excuse enough after the exposure to cold and flood in the uncertain autumn weather during which she undertook her journey. She was forced to keep her room. Nothing could have fallen out more happily to assist the

plot of the hostess. Her hands were occupied with her friend's ailments. Their children must amuse one another. In five days the close companionship between Charles and Elizabeth could not but grow, fostered by the cleverness of the girl's mother. Free to go and come in gardens and woodland, young and lithe, eager to escape from rules and duties and tutors, to forget sad things—Elizabeth Cavendish, the grim details of Sheffield Castle, its alarums and excursions, Charles Stuart, the tragedies of his family—they wooed each other readily. Glimpses of their courtship are visualised for the reader in imaginary dialogue following.

CHAPTER IX

LOVE AND THE WOODMAN

Scene: A parlour in Rufford Abbey, October, 1574. Elizabeth Cavendish bending over her embroidery frame. The Countess of Shrewsbury seated writing.

A man's voice [*calling outside the window*]. Mistress! Mistress Elizabeth! Come out!

[*Elizabeth Cavendish starts, rises, looks at her mother.*

Countess [*apparently stern*]. Say that I have set you a task. Now do not go to the window!

Elizabeth [*checking herself half-way to the window*]. Nay, my Lord, I cannot come indeed. [*Drops her voice.*] Oh! mother, if it were one of the grooms or only my brother!

Countess. Little fool! It is the voice of Lennox. Mark you—play him wisely.

Lennox [*calling again*]. Mistress, there is no “cannot” when the sun calls!

Elizabeth. My Lord, lady mother says she . . . needs me.

Lennox. It is not true. She is brewing a hot posset for my mother. I saw her shoulders in the buttery.

Countess [*her shoulders shaking*]. Oho! it was Mrs. Glasse he saw. I gave her once an old gown of mine to wear.

Elizabeth [*moving to the window*]. No, no, my Lord, she says it was Mrs. Gl. . . . [*The Countess springs up,*

catches her sharply by the wrist, and gives her a little rap with her fan.]

Countess. S-s-t ! Let him think I am not here. Play him, play him !

Lennox. What is that you say, mistress ?

Elizabeth [*embarrassed and miserable*]. Nothing. . . .

[Lennox throws his cap in at the window. It falls at her feet.]

Countess. Girl, do not touch it.

Lennox. Oh, mistress, how the sun calls ! It has called my cap. Some magic has given wings to it and it is gone.

Elizabeth. It is here !

Countess. Hush ! Not yet—not yet.

[Enter at back a maid with a bowl of posset.]

Lennox. Mistress, is my cap flown in at your window perchance ?

Countess [*mimicking Elizabeth's voice*]. Indeed, no.

Elizabeth. Oh—lady mother !

[The maid with the posset giggles, and receives a frown and a box on the ear for her pains.]

Maid. Will your la'ship's grace be pleased to taste ?

Countess. Nay, nay, I cannot abide tansy, but it is good for the joints and for rheumy distillations, and will serve the Lady Margaret finely. Go you and wait for me at her door with the bowl.

Lennox. Elizabeth, I know you have my cap. Without it I cannot walk abroad. The wind is cool.

Elizabeth [*softly*]. Oh, mother, he will have the rheum too !

Countess. Then shall he stay longer and be well nursed and physicked also.

Lennox. Bring me my cap, fair mistress.

Bess [in Elizabeth's voice]. Come and fetch it, my Lord.

Lennox. That I will, if you will come out with me. But not till you promise.

Bess [to Elizabeth]. Say no—say no.

Elizabeth. I cannot, because . . . because . . . I have much work to do, enough for . . . many days.

Lennox. It can tarry, lady. In two days I shall be over the Border.

Elizabeth [agonised]. Oh, mother !

Bess [in the feigned voice]. Not without your cap, I trust, my Lord.

Lennox. What if you give it me back ?

Elizabeth [in tears]. Mother, why does he not come to fetch it ?

Bess. Sh—sh. I scolded him well but half an hour ago, and bid him leave you alone and keep out of my parlour.

Elizabeth [with dignity]. Nay, lady mother, he shall have his cap. [*Picks it up.*]

Bess [taking it from her]. He shall, young impudence, but he shall fetch it. Play him, Bet, play him well, and if he should ask you go into the meadows . . . say "Yes." But not in haste, mark you !

Elizabeth [on her knees, clinging to her mother's gown]. Lady mother . . . I mislike it. . . .

Bess [disengaging herself]. "It," "it" ? What is "it" ? He is a pretty young man, and his blood runs high like Darnley's. But God be thanked 'tis a wiser fool than his brother. Now remember to carry yourself as a Cavendish should. Be cautious ! Make no false step. I go to cosset and posset the mother. S'death, I would I were in your shoes, Bet, to run into the woods instead of tiptoe round a sick-chamber.

Elizabeth [springing up]. May I indeed go into the woods?

Bess [at the door]. Sh-sh. . . . Cavendo tutus!¹

Elizabeth [half runs to the window with the cap, stops, smiles]. My Lord!

Lennox. Are you alone, mistress?

Elizabeth. Yes. . . . No. . . .

Lennox. Who is there?

Elizabeth. Your cap! [*Looks laughing out of the window.*]

Lennox. Coming, coming! [*A minute later he bursts open the door and greets her, walks to the embroidery frame, pushes it into a corner, and holds out his hand.*] Into the sun, Elizabeth.

Elizabeth [shyly]. I have not my hood, my Lord.

Lennox. Charles, Elizabeth!

Elizabeth. Charles . . . my Lord.

Lennox. Into the woods, my Lady. What matters your hood? The sun cannot fire your hair if you wear a hood! [*Draws her down the stairway. At the foot of it she slips her hand from his, and they pass demurely across the courtyard and out into the meadows, talking of light and little things. From time to time Lennox sings snatches of song. The larks trill overhead. They plunge into the woods.*]

Elizabeth. Oh, Charles, I feel as though I had grown lark's wings . . . like your cap.

Lennox. No, no. If you would grow into a bird, then I shall needs become a fowler.

Elizabeth. Nay, you shall have wings too.

Lennox. Why have we not wings, Elizabeth?

Elizabeth [looking up into the sky between the branches]. God is wise, Charles. And we have the beautiful warm

¹ The Cavendish motto, meaning "Secure by taking care."

earth and all the flowers to joy us. Meseems it is more comfortable to talk upon the earth than in the branches. . . . And to build our mansions on the earth, too. Charles. . . .

Lennox. Mansions? I hate them. Great chambers in which one must shiver in cold state because one is poor, great chairs in which one must sit very straight and look wise, great windows where the snow and rain beat and trickle in, or little ones which bar the sun. In Scotland they are like that, little and narrow in the great castles. I hate them.

Elizabeth [*proudly*]. In England we have great windows secure against storms. You should see my mother's house at Hardwick, Charles. It has high windows. And so fair the house. And she says she will build one there still greater and fairer.

Lennox. But I desire no great house. You are little, I am not great. . . . I want a little house, a bower. . . .

Elizabeth. My Lord. . . .

Lennox [*with his arm about her*]. A bower with you, which I would build out of the trees, my own self, like the knight who loved the lady.

Elizabeth. Ah? Who was she?

Lennox. A lady, like you, Elizabeth, and not much taller, so I take it. I read of her in a little book. See . . . here it is. [*Pulls a volume out of the bosom of his jerkin.*] My brother Darnley gave it me once. It is a love tale, all in French, and very curious.

Elizabeth. Read it to me, Charles.

Lennox. Sweetheart, I cannot read it all because the words are so strange, but my brother writ portions of the rightful meanings on the margins. . . . Come . . . let us sit. . . . [*He draws her to a place under the trees.*]

Elizabeth. Charles . . . I am afraid. . . .

Lennox. Not with me. . . .

Elizabeth. There are woodmen. . . . They go to and fro.

Lennox. What of that? There are woodmen in the story—many. [*Opens the book.*]

Elizabeth. Listen, I hear their axes—chip, chop. They are cutting into pieces the lovely trees they felled in the spring. It is very sad.

Lennox. Dear, you are sweetly foolish. They cannot hurt you.

Elizabeth [*sadly*]. So do they cut down the happy trees.

Lennox. Happy to be cut down to build bowers for you and me. . . . Listen. . . . [*Turns over the leaves.*] She was a fairy maiden.

Elizabeth [*shocked*]. Oh! Then she said no prayers.

Lennox. Her foster-father took her from the fairies, and what prayers she missed she learnt at the feet of love.

Elizabeth. Where did she first see her lover . . . ?

Lennox. How can I tell? He loved her from the beginning . . . as I love you.

Elizabeth. . . . The beginning?

Lennox. Two days ago.

Elizabeth [*starting up*]. A woodman comes. [*He pulls her down again.*]

Lennox. How can I tell the story if you run away?

Elizabeth. Indeed . . . I love to listen.

Lennox [*goes on rapidly*]. Well . . . thus was it. These two loved . . . oh, terribly! And the father of the knight, a great count, parted them, since the boy would not go fight against his country's enemies except he wedded the lady . . . and the Count bid her foster-father shut

her in a prison so that she should weave no spells about him more.

Elizabeth. This is too sad a story. [*Wipes her eyes.*]

Lennox. It was a very fair prison in a great castle, dearest. . . . And she quickly escaped from it by her art.

Elizabeth. Good, good !

Lennox. But her love knew not where she went. . . . And he said to his father, "If I trounce your foes in battle, let me but kiss my lady." To which the lord said "Yes." But he kept not his word, and put the knight in prison when he came home bruised and weary after battle.

Elizabeth. Alack !

Lennox. But she—she found the prison and sang through the window, and cut her hair to throw into the chamber that he might remember her.

Elizabeth [*slyly*]. Like your cap, but just now, Charles.

Lennox. Yes, yes. . . . And they called courage to one another till the soldiers came and she hid for fear they should kill her. . . . And then she walked far till she came to a great wood. . . . [*A woodman passes with his axe.*]

Elizabeth. There is the axe, again. It minds me of—of death, Charles !

Lennox. Dearest, it is only a foolish axe to chop your lady mother's fuel.

Elizabeth. And how did the knight find his lady ?

Lennox. When the Count deemed the fairy lady gone for ever he let his son the knight come out of the tower where he was, and feasted him. But the lady dwelt in the woods and he knew it not.

Elizabeth [*indignant*]. He stayed to feast while she wandered in a strange wood ?

Lennox. He stayed but little. And when he could he took his horse and rode out and came to five roads which met. . . . Stay . . . my brother writ of these cross-roads. It is a pretty conceit he made. The one was called "The World," and another "The Wars," a third was "Power," and the fourth . . . see, can you read this?

Elizabeth. "Riches." And the next word is "Poverty."

Lennox. There he waited—perplexed.

Elizabeth. Quick, quick! Which did he choose?

Lennox. Faith, he tried them all save "Poverty." . . . Yet when he would travel down one or the other her voice called him back, and his horse stood like stone till the knight trembled in the twilight and feared she was all a fairy and no woman, but mocked him. And then from his bosom there fell a sheaf of her hair. When he stooped to gather it, it grew into a fine chain, the end whereof he could not see, and it closed about his wrist like a bracelet and drew him to the road called "Poverty."

Elizabeth. Then, surely, he rode fast?

Lennox. Horse and man were exceeding glad—so says the book . . . because of the noble road which opened before them. . . . And the moon and the sun shone together upon them till at last they were come to a little house of boughs twined with lilies. . . . Over the door was written, "Her Heart and My Desire" . . . and there he found his lady, singing fairy songs because she knew that he was faithful. . . . [*Closes the book and bends over her.*]

Elizabeth [*softly*]. And there they stayed surely a little while.

Lennox. . . . To the end of the world. . . .

Elizabeth. . . . But the woodman came by with his axe to cut down the bower.

Lennox. Not in this tale.

Elizabeth. The lilies faded.

Lennox. They were fadeless.

Elizabeth. They grew old . . . and . . . could not feel the sun. . . .

Lennox. Never, never.

Elizabeth. I would it were true, Charles. [*The sound of the axe again interrupts them. There is laughter from men, who pass and repass and point out the lovers to each other.*] There! They have seen us—the rude woodmen. We have no bower any more. [*Hurries away from the tree.*]

Lennox [*in pursuit*]. What mean you by this “woodman” . . . ?

Elizabeth [*holding out her hands for protection*]. I mean there . . . is no for ever. . . . They died, and the lilies and the branches died. Let us go home. . . . Charles, hide me . . . from the woodman !

Lennox. Always, always ! *Elizabeth,* stay with me. Do not ever go from me. You . . . you shall never die !

[*He puts his cloak about her and they walk, closely knit, through the meadows till they reach the Abbey. At the gates they slip apart and go in demurely as before. The Countess looks through a window on to the court over which they pass.*]

Countess. Bet, come instantly to your chamber !

Lennox [*saluting*]. My Lady, she cannot leave me. For so has she promised.

Countess. Lord, Lord ! What have you done ?

Elizabeth. Lady mother, I . . .

Countess. Come in, come in, you sad fools. Every scullion will hear you. [*The three meet on the staircase and the Countess motions them austerey into the parlour.*]

Countess [*to Lennox*]. I bid you stay far from Elizabeth.

Elizabeth. Oh, mother, make no more feints. He loves me. If he goes from me . . . [*Her voice breaks.*]

Lennox. My Lady, she will go to the Border with me and into the world.

Countess [*with a cry of dismay*]. So, so. . . . "He loves me." . . . "I will go over the Border." . . . And how shall a poor woman permit such naughty contrivings!

Elizabeth. Mother. . . . We are not naughty. I did not know he loved me till . . . till we spoke of a story. . . . And then . . . it was very sweet, mother . . . till the woodmen came. . . . And I was frightened and ran, and . . . Charles bid me come home. . . . He says the woodman . . . [*Turns to Lennox for protection.*]

Countess [*with a cry of anger*]. The woodmen. What is this of the woodmen?

Elizabeth. They mocked, and . . .

Countess. Lord, Lord! . . . What is to be done now . . .? You should both be whipped. The woodmen to see you kissing and cozening under the trees? The woodmen? And you a Cavendish! Stay you here till I have told the Lady Lennox. Oh, oh, oh! that I should have such a tale for her. . . .

[*At the sound of her voice Lady Lennox, roused, comes down the corridor in her bedgown.*]

Countess. My Lady!

Lennox. Mother. . . .

Lady Lennox. . . . I was affrighted. I thought you wept, my Lady.

Countess. Matter for weeping, in truth. [*Points to Elizabeth and Lennox, who stand together.*]

Lady Lennox. But . . . how? [*Sinks into a chair.*]

Countess [*vehemently*]. . . . My Lady, . . . these naughty children have carried themselves no better than a pair of turtle-doves; and all in the woods. . . . And the whole world knows it. My very woodmen . . . low fellows . . . laughed! . . . Your son plots to carry my Elizabeth over the Border an if she were a truss of hay! And she, the wretch, too, content to be bundled that way . . . any way . . . so long as it be on his road! Oh! my Lady, help us all, lest shame fall on my house.

Lennox [*defiant*]. No shame to love well, my Lady. Are there no priests? And this an Abbey!

Lady Lennox. Boy, go you to your room and leave me talk with my Lady here.

Lennox. I go with Elizabeth to the gallery. When you call, mother, we will come. . . . [*Kisses her hand and goes out with Elizabeth.*]

Lady Lennox. A priest! There is time enough. . . .

Countess. How do I know if they will not fly like birds together if we say them "Nay"?

Lady Lennox. . . . The saints forbid! . . .

Countess [*quickly*]. The boy is wild . . . for love makes wildlings of men. . . . It is the only word of wisdom he has said . . . that of the priest.

Lady Lennox. Great Heaven! . . .

Countess. Young fools. . . . Yet, if we part them . . . shall not our consciences give us everlasting punishment?

Lady Lennox. True, true. . . . The girl is very gentle, my Lady. . . . There is a look in her eye that . . . And he is very ripe for love. [*The Countess punctuates her speeches with sympathetic gestures.*] And I have seen much sorrow, and the House of Lennox dies . . . with Charles.

Countess. Come . . . let us not talk of death . . . but look properly upon this matter and devise, instead of funerals, weddings. Come, my sweet friend, dear Lady . . . to your chamber. . . . Rest, and let us comfort one another. . . . Come! [*She supports Lady Lennox out of the room.*]

CHAPTER X

AFTERMATH

THERE was, as the two mothers agreed, but one way out of it all—a speedy marriage. No time to invite the blessing of the bride’s stepfather, no time for signing of deeds, or for collecting bride-gear, or for endowing boy and girl with house and lands. These things would as well be done afterwards as now, and a pompous family wedding in the Shrewsbury household would just now have been attended with all sorts of difficulties. Without more ado the matter was settled, and the actual wedding seems to have taken place at Rufford in the presence of only a very few persons. Indeed, in the words of one historian, the pair “married almost as soon as Lady Lennox was able to leave her bedroom.” It has been suggested by the same writer that the two dowagers, in aiding and abetting the marriage, were at cross purposes. It is certain that Lady Shrewsbury had met her match in character, purpose, and ability in intrigue. She could not have been able to persuade Margaret Lennox in the affair against her will and conscience. Henderson elaborates the suggestion thus: “The motive of Lady Lennox was probably reconciliation with the Queen of Scots, through the new connection formed with the Shrewsburys. If Elizabeth died—and there was a general impression that she would not live long—Mary

might very possibly succeed her; and though Lady Lennox thought it prudent to assert to Elizabeth that she never could have dealings with the Queen of Scots, since, being flesh and blood, she could not forget the murder of her child, yet she did not wish to debar herself from all further favour from the possible Queen of England, who was also the mother of her grandchild (i.e. James of Scotland). As for Mary, nothing could suit her better than a reconciliation with Lady Lennox, since it would mean the renewal of support from many Catholics who had been estranged from her by the circumstances attending the death of Darnley. In any case, whatever Mary's part in the accomplishment of the marriage, and whether any understanding was then arrived at by her with Lady Lennox or not, Mary, after the death of Lady Lennox in 1578, affirmed that she had been reconciled to her for five or six years, and that Lady Lennox sent her letters expressing regret at the wrong she had done her in the accusations she had been induced to make against her, at the instance of Elizabeth and her Council."¹

This is, however, a part of future history. The facts show that Mary seems to have had no hand in the marriage, and we cannot imagine that after carefully balancing all possibilities Lady Shrewsbury would have invited her interest. The whole thing would have been revealed and exaggerated by spies, and thus assume the form of a very serious plot. Lady Lennox certainly trusted to Elizabeth's credence in her old enmity against her daughter-in-law to clear her from blame. Lady Shrewsbury doubtless pretended to herself that

¹ *Mary Queen of Scots: Her Environment and Tragedy*, by T. F. Henderson,

she could not be justly accused of a grab at royal rights, on behalf of her family, since Scotland had already its King and it was open to England to name a successor. La Mothe Fénélon, the French Ambassador, feared that the Lennox intimacy would estrange the Shrewsburys from Mary, and so make her case harder. The very contrary happened, as the correspondence reveals.

For the moment we are concerned with the days immediately following that sudden ceremony at Rufford. Details of the itinerary of the bridal pair are not forthcoming, neither does it appear where the older Lady Lennox went after her momentous visit, nor whether young Elizabeth and her husband took shelter with her mother or his. News of the event did not reach the Queen till fully a month later. Instantly she scented treason. Here was a chance for her to behave once more after the pattern of her autocratic father. She belaboured the Earl of Shrewsbury, and despatched to both dowagers and the bride and bridegroom a summons to Court.

Lord Shrewsbury, who in these days scarcely ever put pen to paper except to expostulate, explain, and apologise, wrote three separate letters on the subject—to the Queen, to Burghley, and to Lord Leicester. It will suffice to quote the two first :—

“May it please your excellent Majesty,

“The commandment your Majesty once gave me, that I should sometimes write to you, although I had little to write of, boldeneth me thus to presume, rather to avoid blame of negligence than dare tarry long for any matter worthy your Majesty’s hearing; only this I may write; it is greatly to my comfort to

hear your Majesty passed your progress in perfect health and so do continue. I pray to Almighty God to hold it many years, and long after my days ended ; so shall your people find themselves most happy.

“This Lady, my charge, is safe at your Majesty’s commandment.

“And, may it further please your Majesty, I understood of late your Majesty’s displeasure is sought against my wife, for marriage of her daughter to my Lady Lennox’s son. I must confess to your Majesty, as true it is, it was dealt in suddenly, and without my knowledge ; but as I dare undertake and ensure to your Majesty, for my wife, she, finding her daughter disappointed of young Barté, where she hoped that the other young gentleman was inclined to love with a few days’ acquaintance, did her best to further her daughter in this match ; without having therein any other intent or respect than with reverend duty towards your Majesty she ought. I wrote of this matter to my Lord Leicester a good while ago at great length. I hid nothing from him that I knew was done about the same, and thought not meet to trouble your Majesty therewith, because I took it to be of no such importance as to write of, until now that I am urged by such as I see will not forbear to devise and speak what may procure any suspicion, or doubtfulness of my service here. But as I have always found your Majesty my good and gracious Sovereign, so do I comfort myself that your wisdom can find out right well what causes move them thereunto, and therefore am not afraid of any doubtful opinion, or displeasure to remain with your Majesty of me, or of my wife, whom your highness and your council have many ways tried in

times of most danger. We never had any thought or respect but as your Majesty's most true and faithful servants ; and so do truly serve and faithfully love and honour your Majesty, ever praying to Almighty God for your Majesty, as we are in duty bounden.

“SHEFFIELD, *2nd of December, 1574.*”

The other letter is headed :—

“To My Lord Tre ,

“My very good Lord, for that I am advertised the late marriage of my wife's daughter is not well taken in the Court, and thereupon are some conjectures more than well, brought to her Majesty's ears, in ill part against my wife ; I have a little touched the same in my letters now to her Majesty, referring further knowledge thereof to letters I sent my Lord of Leicesters a good while since, wherein I made a long discourse of that matter ; and if your Lordship meet with anything thereof that concerns my wife or me, and sounds in ill part against us, let me crave of your Lordship so much favour as to speak your knowledge and opinion of us both. No man is able to say so much as your Lordship of our service because you have so carefully searched it, with great respect to the safe keeping of my charge. So I take leave of your Lordship.

“SHEFFIELD, *2nd December, 1574.*”

These letters did not help matters in the slightest. The two Countesses were obliged to go to Court for chastisement, and apparently Bess Shrewsbury repaired thither before any interview could be secured with her husband. Nor have any letters from her been found to show whether she was awestruck or defiant, though

correspondence must have passed between wife and husband upon a matter so urgent.

The fateful northern journey took place about October 9th. Queen Elizabeth's summons was dated November 17th, and reached the delinquents within a few days. Lady Lennox, who, in her royal capacity and as mother of the bridegroom, may legally be regarded as the prime offender, followed Lord Shrewsbury's example of explanation and expostulation. She, too, wrote promptly to Lords Burghley and Leicester :—¹

“My very good Lord,

“Assuring myself of your friendship I will use but few words at this present, other than to let you understand of my wearisome journey and the heavy burden of the Queen's Majesty's displeasure, which I know well I have not deserved, together with a letter of small comfort that I received from my Lord of Leicester, which being of your Lordship read, I shall desire to be returned to me again. I also send unto your Lordship, here enclosed, the copy of my letter now sent to my Lord of Leicester ; and I beseech you to use your friendship towards me as you see time. Thus with my hearty commendations, I commit you to Almighty God, whom I beseech to send you long life to your heart's desire. Huntingdon this 3 of December.

“Your Lordship's assured loving friend,

“MARGARET LENNOX.

“To the Right Honourable my very good Lord and friend, the Lord-Treasurer of England.”

It is unfortunate that one of the enclosures, the letter

State Papers—Domestic, quoted by Miss Strickland.

from Leicester, is not to be found, for it would have been interesting to read that gentleman for once in a mood that was not suave and reassuring.

The letter to Leicester gives a graphic description of her uncomfortable journey across flooded country :—¹

“HUNTINGDON, *December 3, 1574.*

“My very good Lord,—The great unquietness and trouble that I have had with passing these dangerous waters, which hath many times enforced me to leave my way, which hath been some hindrance to me that hitherto I have not answered your Lordship’s letters chiefly on that point wherein your Lordship, with other my friends (as your Lordship says) seems ignorant how to answer for me. And being forced to stay this present Friday in Huntingdon, somewhat to refresh myself, and my overlaboured mules, that are both crooked and lame with their extreme labour by the way, I thought good to lay open to your Lordship, in these few lines, what I have to say for me, touching my going to Rufford to my Lady of Shrewsbury, both being thereunto very earnestly requested, and the place not one mile distant out of my way. Yea, and a much fairer way, as is well to be proved ; and my Lady meeting me herself upon the way, I could not refuse, it being near XXX miles from Sheffield. And as it was well known to all the country thereabouts that great provision was there made both for my Lady of Suffolk and me—who friendly brought me on the way to Grantham, and so departed home again, neither she nor I knowing any such thing till the morning after I came to Newark. And so I

¹ State Papers—Domestic.

meant simply and well, so did I least mistrust that my doings should be taken in evil part, for, at my coming from her Majesty, I perceived she misliked of my Lady of Suffolk being at Chatsworth, I asked her Majesty if I were bidden thither, for that had been my wonted way before if I might go. She prayed me not, lest it should be thought I should agree with the Queen of Scots. And I asked her Majesty, if she could think so, for I was made of flesh and blood, and could never forget the murder of my child. And she said, 'Marry, by her faith she could not think so that ever I could forget it, for if I would I were a devil.' Now, my Lord, for that hasty marriage of my son, Charles, after that he had entangled himself so that he could have none other, I refer the same to your Lordship's good consideration, whether it was not most fitly for me to marry them, he being mine only son and comfort that is left me. And your Lordship can bear me witness how desirous I have been to have had a match for him other than this. And the Queen's Majesty, much to my comfort, to that end gave me good words at my departure."

There were other letters from her repeating the statements about her careful avoidance of Chatsworth and Sheffield, the helpless position in which she was placed by "the sudden affection" of her son, and begging for the Queen's compassion "on my widowed estate, being aged and of many cares."

She reached Court on December 12th, and was accorded such a reception that La Mothe Fénélon thought it worth while to include, in his despatches to France, her fears and apprehensions. He records her dread of her old prison, the Tower, and her hope that she may

escape at least that indignity through the influence of good friends. She went meekly to her house at Hackney, with Charles and Elizabeth Lennox, who had scarcely learnt the meaning of the word honeymoon. There the three, forbidden to leave the precincts of the house, spent a joyless Christmas, while, in lieu of a royal festival greeting, Christmas Eve brought them Elizabeth's orders that they were to have intercourse only with such persons as were named by the Privy Council. Immediately after Christmas the door of the Tower gaped and swallowed the Lennox dowager. To the Tower also, it seems, was sent her confederate. The comments of Bess of Shrewsbury have not been chronicled. But she probably remembered keenly enough the days when as "Sentlow" she had the sense to keep out of any active participation in the marriage of Lady Catherine Grey. Her thoughts in retrospect could not have been very pleasant, and genuine fears for the fate of her young and easily-led daughter must have jostled fears for her own skin.

As for Lady Lennox, her sensations were still more poignant. "Thrice have I been cast into prison," said she, "not for matters of treason, but for love matters. First, when Thomas Howard, son to Thomas first Duke of Norfolk, was in love with myself; then for the love of Henry Darnley, my son, to Queen Mary of Scotland; and lastly for the love of Charles, my younger son, to Elizabeth Cavendish."

It was just after Christmas that Lord Shrewsbury again bestirred himself and applied to Burghley, though he ostensibly does it less on behalf of his wife than of Lady Lennox.

“My very good Lord,

“Upon my Lady Lennox’s earnest request, as to your Lordship I am sure shall appear, I have written to my Lords of the Council all I can find out of her behaviour towards this Queen and dealing when she was in these north parts; and if some disallowed of my writing (as I look they will, because they would have it thought that I should have enough to do to answer for myself) let such . . .¹ reprove, or find any . . .¹ respect to her Majesty in me or my wife is sought for, and then there is some cause to reprehend me, and for them to call out against me as they do. I take that Lady Lennox be a subject in all respects worthy the Queen’s Majesty’s favour, and for the duty I bear to her Majesty I am bound, methinks, to commend her so as I find her; yea, and to intreat you, and all of my Lords of the Council for her, to save her from blemish, if no offence can be found in her towards her Majesty. I do not nor can find the marriage of that Lady’s son to my wife’s daughter can any way be taken with indifferent judgment, be any offence or contemptuous to her Majesty; and then, methinks, that benefit any subject may by law claim might be permitted to any of mine as well. But I must be plain with your Lordship. It is not the marriage matter nor the hatred some bear to my Lady Lennox, my wife, or to me, that makes this great ado and occupies heads with so many devices. It is a greater matter; which I leave to conjecture, not doubting but your Lordship’s wisdom hath foreseen it, and thereof had due consideration, as always you have been most careful for it.

¹ Blank in the original, as given in Lodge’s *Illustrations of British History*.

"I have no more to trouble your Lordship withal, but that I would not have her Majesty think, if I could see any cause to imagine any intent of liking or insinuation with this Queen the rather to grow by this marriage, or any other inconvenience might come thereby to her Majesty, that I could or would bear with it, or hide it from her Majesty, for that Lady's sake, or for my wife, or any other cause else; for besides the faith I bear her Majesty, with a singular love I look not by any means but by her Majesty only to be made better than I am; nor by any change to hold that I have—so take my leave of your Lordship.

"Sheffield Castle (where my charge is safe), the 27th of December, 1574.

"Your Lordship's assured friend to my power,

"G. SHREWSBURY."

This letter is dignified, slightly defiant—claiming common justice for his people, as "any subject" may do—and doggedly loyal. He is no opportunist, and for any improvement in his fortunes he looks to Elizabeth only. He has acted whole-heartedly and with a single mind. He has tendered to the Lords of the Council all possible details which would assist in clearing Lady Lennox from imputations in regard to co-operation with Mary of Scotland. He fully recognises that this is the "greater matter" which "occupies heads with so many devices" and wherein lies the crux of the affair. He knew that a long official enquiry was inevitable. This took the form of a special Court under the Earl of Huntingdon, whom Mary of Scots and the Earl alike detested. The choice of him as grand inquisitor must have been the more galling just now,

because reports were rife that this rash marriage had finally decided the Queen to supersede Lord Shrewsbury as incapable and unworthy of her reliance. Such rumours were always a part of her policy. She knew perfectly well who was most useful to her, and she was not going to relax her grip upon Shrewsbury, his endurance, his loyalty, his houses, and his income.

Lord Huntingdon's enquiry went forward, and both ladies were ultimately acquitted of "large treasons." If the gaoler-soldier Earl did not give his wife a sound verbal drubbing for endangering the peace of his whole house in so gratuitous a fashion it would be strange. From the very first, in spite of his assurances to the Queen, he must have scented his lady's ambition with regard to any possible semi-royal offspring of the Rufford marriage. The matter weighed on him greatly in after life. One can only assume that his Bess at this period lost her sense of perspective, and that in one sense her noted long-headedness deserted her. The enquiry over, the principal offenders, crushed and humble (Lady Lennox at all events seemed so), retired to their homes. It is mentioned that the royal order giving Lady Shrewsbury her freedom included permission for her to repair to the baths at Buxton, a change of air which must have been extremely salutary after the poor ventilation of the Tower of London, even under the less rigorous conditions accorded to prisoners of quality.

By the middle of May, Lady Lennox was once more at her Hackney house. A visit to Buxton waters for her was out of the question, both as regards policy and expense. At Hackney she rested, very much out of the world and very poor, with her gentle little daughter-

in-law and son, who spent the first year of their married life in a tolerably morose atmosphere of suspicion and unpopularity. They had, of course, a few visitors. Gilbert Talbot, who seems always to have been the spokesman of the family, and to have kept in touch with its various members, records the impression made by the Lennoxes on a certain "Mr. Tyndall," who subsequently carried letters down to Derbyshire to the mother of Elizabeth Lennox :—

"This bearer, Mr. Tyndall, was at Hackney, where he found them there well. And I trust very shortly that the dregs of all misconstruction will be wiped away, that their abode there after this sort will be altered."

This means that the inmates were socially taboo and were still kept "within bounds."

In July of the same year there is a most pathetic little letter from the girl-wife Elizabeth, by this time in a fair way to produce an heir for the perishing house of Lennox. She makes no allusion to the fact in this piteous and formal little note to the mother who used her for family purposes much in the same way as she used a stone for the building of her other "workes." The cause of the displeasure which the writer seeks to disarm is inexplicable. Elizabeth Cavendish was exactly the opposite in character to her mother, or her mother's eldest daughter Mary, wife of Gilbert Talbot. The latter—of whom more presently—was a hot-tempered, vindictive, energetic creature, with plenty of intelligence. Elizabeth Cavendish was gentle, unassuming, tender-hearted. She would certainly take the line of least resistance. This is the letter :—¹

¹ Hunter's *Hallamshire*.

“My humble duty remembered: beseeching your L. of your daily blessings: presuming of your mother-like affection towards me your child that trust I have not so evilly deserved as your La. hath made show, by your letters to others, which maketh me doubtful that your La. hath been informed some great untruth of me or else I had well hoped that for some small trifle I should not have continued in your displeasure so long a time. And I might be so bold as to crave at your La. hands that it would please you to extreme¹ such false bruits as your La. hath heard reported of me as lightly as you have done when othere were in the like case, I should think myself much the more bound to your La. I beseech you make my hearty commendations to my aunt. I take my leave in humble wise.

“Hackney, 25th of July.

“Your La. humble and Obedient daughter,

“E. LENOX.

“To the right honourable the Countess
of Shrewsbury my very good mother.”

At all events, the mother's displeasure must have melted upon the birth of her Lennox grandchild. Unhappily for the ambitious Bess, this was not a son but a girl, christened Arabella, who was afterwards to play her part in just such a tragi-comedy of ambition, Court pageant, and luckless marriage as befell her grandmother Margaret Lennox, and the Ladies Catherine and Mary Grey. Had the child been a boy Queen Elizabeth might have been less inclined to clemency. Her sex, her helplessness, the poverty of her father's house, and the dangerous and delicate condition of his health were

¹ Explain or set aside.

all inducements to the Queen's compassion, and also rendered the babe a useful item in the plans of the "Mistress Builder." Her birth, of course, brought the Shrewsburys into an oddly contradictory relationship towards Mary of Scotland, who always showed the tenderest interest in the child. It must also have assisted to complete the better understanding between Darnley's mother and widow. Already they had drawn closer in a mutual dread lest, since the assassination of the old Earl of Lennox, the evil practices of the present Regent, Lord Morton, should injure the young James of Scotland. Lady Lennox's letter to Mary from Hackney, dated November 10th, 1575, makes their reconciliation very clear :—

"It may please your Majesty, I have received your letters and mind both by your letters and otherwise, much to my comfort specially perceiving what jealous natural care your Majesty hath of our sweet and peerless jewel in Scotland. I have been as fearful and as careful as your Majesty of him, so that the wicked governor should not have power to do harm to his person, whom God preserve from his enemies. I beseech your Majesty fear not, but trust in God all shall be well. The treachery of your traitors is evidently no better than before. I shall always play my part to your Majesty's content so as may tend to both our comforts. And now I must yield your Majesty my most humble thanks for your good remembrance and bounty to our little daughter, her who some day may serve your highness. Almighty God grant unto your Majesty a long and happy life.

"Your Majesty's most humble and

loving mother and aunt,

"MARGARET LENNOX."

The "little daughter" is surely the young Elizabeth Lennox (*née* Cavendish), who adds this postscript to the letter :—

"I most humbly thank your Majesty that it pleased you to remember me, your poor servant, both with a token and in my La. Gr.'s letter,¹ which is not little to my comfort. I can but wish and pray God for your Majesty's long and happy estate. . . . I may do your Majesty better service, which I think long to do, and shall always be as ready thereto as any servant your Majesty hath, according as by duty I am bound. I beseech your highness to pardon these rude lines, and accept the good heart of the writer, who loves and honours your Majesty unfeignedly.

"Your Majesty's most humble and lowly servant through life,

"E. LENNOX."

Now the above convincing and pathetic letter of the dowager Lady Lennox, it seems, never reached Mary ; but fortunately for Mary's reputation and as proof of the accord between her and her mother-in-law with regard to the marriage and other matters, has been preserved.

Two years later, 1577, Queen and mother-in-law were toiling to get the Scottish prince away from the "wicked governor," and Mary says of Lady Lennox, "I praise God that she becomes daily more sensible of the faithlessness and evil intentions of those whom she previously assisted with her name against me."

¹ Lady Grace's letter.

CHAPTER XI

VARIOUS OCCURRENCES

THE Shrewsbury pair started the year 1575 in different fashion. She was in the Tower and not at all in a happy mood. He also in a fortress—Sheffield—but as warder and not prisoner, and more unhappy, because in the larger things he was always the more conscientious, yet bestirred himself to send a diplomatic present of rich gold plate to Lord Burghley, and was himself in the usual manner the recipient of bounties from his friends and tenants. Burghley acknowledges the present and his indebtedness in highly satisfactory terms to the master of Sheffield Castle :—

“And now, my Lord, I find such continuance or rather increase, of your good will to me, by your costly gift of plate this new year, as you may account me greatly in your debt and yet ready with my heart and service to acquit you. I humbly therefore pray your Lordship to make proof of my good will where my power may answer the same, and I trust you shall find the best disposed debtor that your Lordship hath to acquit my debt.”

Lodge prints immediately before this letter from the Lord Treasurer a fragment (also from the Talbot manuscripts) in which Lord Shrewsbury lays his financial

case emphatically before the Queen, and there is no doubt that his appeal and the present of gold plate to her Lord Treasurer were incidents closely related :—

“Your Majesty was minded to allow me for the keeping of this Lady but £30 a week. When I received her into my charge at your Majesty’s hands, I understood very well it was a most dangerous service, and thought overhard to perform, without some great mischief to himself at least, and as it seemed most hard and fearful to others and every man shrunk from it, so much the gladder was I to take it upon me, thereby to make appear to your Majesty my zealous mind to serve you in place of greatest peril ; and I thought it was the best proof your Majesty could make of me. I demanded not great allowance, nor did stick for anything as all men used to do. My Lords of your Council, upon good deliberation, assigned by your Majesty’s commandment, a portion of £52 every week (less by the half than your Majesty paid before she came to me) which I took, and would not in that doubtful time have refused your Majesty’s service of trust so committed to me, if my lands and life had lain thereon ; and how I have passed my service, and accomplished your trust committed to me, with quiet, surety——”

That sudden break in the appeal, whatever its cause, has its own dramatic force.

As regards Court matters, a long letter from Francis Talbot, the eldest son, who apparently wrote so rarely, belongs to the beginning of this year. It gives a picture of Queen Elizabeth in a mood of anxiety, depression, and perplexity in regard to foreign politics, especially touching the all-important decision as to whether or not

she should accept the offer of the suzerainty of the Netherland States :—

“Her Majesty is troubled with these causes which maketh her very melancholy ; and seemeth greatly to be out of quiet. What shall be done in these matters as yet is unknown, but here are ambassadors of all sides who labour greatly one against another.”

To this year also belongs a kindly letter—this time on purely family matters—from the wife of Francis Talbot, Lady Ann, *née* Herbert, daughter of William, Earl Pembroke, to the Countess of Shrewsbury. In this the forthcoming “prograce” is mentioned, and the visit of Queen Elizabeth to the then Countess of Pembroke, her sister-in-law, *née* Catherine Talbot, and married to Henry, Earl Pembroke :—

“Good Madame, I am to crave pardon for not writing to my Lord’s man Harry Grace. The cause I willed him to declare to your La. which was the extremity that my sister of Pembroke was in at that time ; which hath continued till Thursday last. Since that day she hath been out of her swooning, but not able to stand or go. Her greatest grief is now want of sleep, and not able to away with the sight of meat ; but considering her estate before we think ourselves happy of this change, hoping that better will follow shortly. The Queen Majesty hath been here with her twice ; very late both times. The last time it was ten of the clock at night ere her Majesty went hence, being so great a mist as there were divers of the barges and boats that waited for her lost their ways, and landed in wrong places, but thanks be to God her Majesty came well home without

cold or fear. For the holding of the progress I am sure your La. heareth ; for my part I can write no certainty, but as I am in all other matters, as I have always professed and as duty doth bind me, ready at your La. command ; and in anything I may show it either at this time or when occasion serveth, if I be not as willing thereto as any child of your own, then let me be condemned according to my deserts ; otherwise I humbly crave your La. good opinion of me not to decrease, remembering your La. commandment heretofore, to write to you as often as I could, which now in this place I shall have better means than I have had in the country, and thereupon presuming to lengthen my letter upon any occasion, although I count this of my sister very evil news, yet considering her recovery, I hope my long scribbling will the less trouble your La. And so with my most humble duty of my Lord and your La. I humbly take my leave. From Baynards Castle the 8th of May.

“Your La. assured loving daughter to command,

“ANNE TALBOT.

“My sister of Pembroke hath willed to remember her humble duty to my Lord and you, with desire of his daily blessing. As soon as she is able she will do it herself.

“To the right honourable and my assured good Lady and mother, the Countess of Shrewsbury.”

That “my sister Pembroke” recovered from her swoonings and her convalescence is stated at the close of a long letter from Gilbert Talbot, in February, to both his parents.

During the whole of the spring the Earl's corre-

spondence was large. Sir Francis Walsingham and others kept him informed of all State events and possibilities which could affect politics. In a paper which the Earl endorses "Occurrences, from Mr. Secretary Walsingham" is contained the news of the disappearance from the French Court of Henry of Navarre, the overtures made to him by the French King, the gradual increase of his adherents among the Protestants, the multifarious schemes of the Duke of Guise, and all the details which made for civil war. The belief in magic seems to have had sufficient hold upon a statesman like Walsingham to induce him to include a note such as this :—

"There is secret report, and that very constantly affirmed by men of credit, that a day or two before the King of Navarre departed, it happened the Duke of Guise and him to play at dice, upon a very smooth board, in the King's cabinet ; and that, after they had done, there appeared suddenly upon the board certain great and round drops of blood that astonished them marvellously, finding no cause in the blood of the world, but, as it were, a very prodigy."

Another letter of this year is very interesting, as it shows the indefatigable Lady Shrewsbury once more at her match-making, and once again seeking to ally her family with one which could most assist it at Court—the family of Lord Burghley. Lord Shrewsbury's letter making the proposal as suggested by his wife is not forthcoming, but Lord Burghley's reply is full and detailed, and breathes caution in every word. His excuses for declining the offer are quite reasonable. At the same time he must have had sufficient

insight into her Ladyship's masterful character to strengthen his refusal. He accentuates his fear of the Queen's distrust by instancing the absurd reports circulated about him when he merely went to Buxton to drink the waters, and he concludes with a quaintly sententious condemnation of "human learning" in wishing well to the boy whom he did not desire for his son-in-law.

"My very good Lord,—My most hearty and due commendations done, I cannot sufficiently express in words the inward hearty affection that I conceive by your Lordship's friendly offer of the marriage of your younger son; and that in such a friendly sort, by your own letter, and as your Lordship writes, the same proceeding of yourself. Now, my Lord, as I think myself much beholden to you for this your Lordship's kindness, and manifest argument of a faithful goodwill, so must I pray your Lordship to accept mine answer, with assured opinion of my continuance in the same towards your Lordship. There are specially two causes why I do not in plain terms consent by way of conclusion hereto; the one, for that my daughter is but young in years; and upon some reasonable respects, I have determined (notwithstanding I have been very honourably offered matches) not to treat of marrying her, if I may live so long, until she be above fifteen or sixteen, and if I were of more likelihood myself to live longer than I look to do, she should not, with my liking, be married before she were near eighteen or twenty. The second cause why I differ to yield to conclusion with your Lordship is grounded upon such a consideration as, if it were

not truly to satisfy your Lordship, and to avoid a just offence which your Lordship might conceive of my forbearing, I would not by writing or message utter, but only by speech to your Lordship's self. My Lord, it is over true and over much against reason that upon my being at Buxton last, advantage was sought by some that loved me not to confirm in her Majesty a former conceit which had been laboured to put into her head, that I was of late become friendly to the Queen of Scots, and that I had no disposition to encounter her practices; and now at my being at Buxton, her Majesty did directly conceive that my being there was, by means of your Lordship and my Lady, to enter into intelligence with the Queen of Scots; and hereof at my return to her Majesty's presence I had very sharp reproofs for my going to Buxton with plain charging of me for favouring the Queen of Scots; and that in so earnest a sort I never looked for, knowing my integrity to her Majesty; but especially knowing how contrariously the Queen of Scots conceived of me for many things past to the offence of the Queen of Scots. And yet, true it is, I never indeed gave just cause by any private affection of my own, or for myself, to offend the Queen of Scots; but whatsoever I did was for the services of mine own sovereign Lady and Queen, which if it were yet again to be done I would do. And though I know myself subject to contrary workings of displeasure yet will I not, for remedy of any of them both, decline from the duty I owe to God and my sovereign Queen; for I know and do understand, that I am in this contrary sort maliciously depraved, and yet in secret sort; on the

one part, and that of long time, that I am the most dangerous enemy and evil willer to the Queen of Scots ; on the other side that I am also a secret well willer to her and her title, and that I have made my party good with her. Now, my Lord, no man can make both these true together ; but it sufficeth such as like not me in doing my duty to deprave me, and yet in such sort is done in darkness, as I cannot get opportunity to convince them in the light. In all these crossings, my good Lord, I appeal to God who knoweth, yea (I thank him infinitely), who directeth my thoughts to intend principally the service and honour of God, and jointly with it the surety and greatness of my sovereign Lady the Queen's Majesty ; and for any other respect but it may tend to those two, I appeal to God to punish me if I have any. As for the Queen of Scots, truly I have no spot of evil meaning to her. Neither do I mean to deal with any titles to the Crown. If she shall intend any evil to the Queen's Majesty, my sovereign, for her sake I must and will mean to impeach her ; and therein I may be her unfriend, or worse.

“ Well now, my good Lord, your Lordship seeth I have made a long digression from my answer, but I trust your Lordship can consider what moveth me thus to digress. Surely it behoveth me not only to live uprightly, but to avoid all probable arguments that may be gathered to render me suspected to her Majesty whom I serve with all dutifulness and sincerity ; and therefore I gather this, that if it were understood that there were a communication or a purpose of marriage between your Lordship's son and my daughter I am sure there would be an advantage sought to increase

these former suspicions. Considering the young years of our two children . . . if the matter were fully agreed betwixt us, the parents, the marriage could not take effect, I think it best to refer the motion in silence, and yet so to order it with ourselves that, when time shall hereafter be more convenient, we may (and then also with less cause of vain suspicion) renew it. And in the meantime I must confess myself much bounden to your Lordship . . . wishing your Lordship's son all the good education may be meet to teach him to fear God, love your Lordship, his natural father, and to know his friends; without any curiosity of human learning, which, without the fear of God, I see doeth great hurt to all youth in this time and age. My Lord, I pray you bear with me scribbling, which I think your Lordship shall hardly read, and yet I would not use my man's hand in such a matter as this.

“From Hampton Court, 24th December, 1575.

“Your Lordship's most assured commandment,

“W. BURGHLEY.”

The boy in question was Edward Talbot, the Earl's fourth son. His matrimonial chances did not suffer by this just refusal, for in after years he married one of the twin heiresses of Lord Ogle of Northumberland, and eventually, after the death of his two elder brothers, succeeded to his father's earldom.

A single bill of items of the Earl's expenditure in the year 1575 amounting to £300 is of a nature which shows how many and extensive were the purchases justifying his constant appeals to the Treasury. All these items he had to import from France by special messenger. Hogshead after hogshead of French wine was required for Mary's use. Her household drank

it in preference to the heavier English brew of ale. Moreover, she was accustomed to use it for her bath, especially when indisposed. Buckram and canvas, damask and sheeting, vinegar and live quails ("with cages for the said quails"), paper and hempseed, "confitures and other sugar-works," and even "fourteen pounds of sleyed silk for my Lady, being of all colours," go to this long bill of goods from Rouen.

My Lady meanwhile was properly reinstated in the English Queen's confidence. It would please Bess Shrewsbury well to know that this letter from the Earl of Leicester, written early in 1576 to her husband, has come down to posterity:—

"My Lord,—For that this bearer is so well known and trusted of you I will leave to trouble you with any long letters, and do commit the more to his report, for that he is well able to satisfy your Lordship fully of all things here. And, touching one part of your letter sent lately to me, about the access of my Lady, your wife, to the Queen there, I find the Queen's Majesty well pleased that she may repair at all times, and not forbear the company of that Queen, having not only very good opinion of my Lady's wisdom and discretion, but thinks how convenient it is for that Queen to be accompanied and pass the time rather with my Lady than meaner persons. I doubt not but your Lordship shall hear in like sort also from her Majesty touching the same, and yet I may well signify thus much, as from herself, to your Lordship. The rest I commend to this bearer, and your Lordship, with my good Lady, to the Almighty. In haste, this first of May.

"Your Lordship's assured kinsman,

"R. LEICESTER."

Soon after, in June, Lord Shrewsbury, at Buxton with his "charge," asks that he may remove her, not to Tutbury as suggested, but back to Sheffield Lodge. There was a "bruit" that Lord Leicester was going to Buxton for the waters, and it was necessary, seeing that his going would probably attract others in the world of fashion, not to allow Mary to linger at the baths. A letter from Gilbert Talbot, in July, 1576, full of the usual delightful chit-chat about Queen and Court, mentions the Buxton expedition in connection with the magnificent Leicester :—

"My duty most humbly remembered, right honourable my singular good Lord and father. Since my coming hither to the Court there hath been sundry determinations of her Majesty's progress this summer. Yesterday it was set down that she would go to Grafton¹ and Northampton, Leicester, and to Ashby, my Lord Huntingdon's house, and there to have remained twenty-one days, to the end the water of Buxton might have been daily brought thither for my Lord of Leicester, or any other, to have used ; but late yesternight this purpose altered, and now at this present her Majesty thinketh to go no further than Grafton ; howbeit there is no certainty, for these two or three days it hath changed every five hours. The physicians have fully resolved that wheresoever my Lord Leicester be he must drink and use Buxton water twenty days together. My Lady Essex and my Lady Sussex will be shortly at Buxton, and my Lady Norris shortly after ; I cannot learn of any others that come from hence.

"This day Mr. Secretary Walsingham has gotten the

¹ The Queen had a small palace here, in Northamptonshire.

Bill signed for the S. Q.'s diet, and to-morrow early it shall be sent to the Exchequer, that as soon as possible we may receive the money, which shall be disposed according to your Lordship's commandment in payment of all your debts here.

"I have bespoken two pair of little flagons, for there are none ready made, and I fear they will not be finished before my departure hence. I have seen many fair hangings, and your Lordship may have all prices, either two shillings a stick or seven groats, three, four, five, or six shillings the stick, even as your Lordship will bestow ; but there is of five shillings the stick that is very fair. But unless your Lordship send up a measure of what depth and breadth you would have them, surely they will not be to your Lordship's liking ; for the most of them are very shallow, and I have seen none that I think deep enough for a guest chamber, but for lodgings.

"I have had some talk with my Lord of Leicester since my coming, whom I find most assuredly well affected towards your Lordship and yours. I never knew man in my life more joyful for their friend than he at my Lady's noble and wise government of herself at her late being here ; saying that he heartily thanked God of so good a friend and kinsman of your Lordship, and that you are matched with so noble and good a wife. I saw the Queen's Majesty yesternight in the garden ; but for that she was talking with my Lord Hunsden, she spake nothing to me, but looked very earnestly on me. I hear her Majesty conceiveth somewhat better of me than heretofore ;¹ and my Lord

¹ Gilbert Talbot had apparently fallen out of favour. The matter is, however, so unimportant that no explanation remains of it.

of Leicester doubteth not in time to bring all well again.

“I can learn no certain news worthy to write to your Lordship’s Secretary. William Winter hath not yet sent my resolute answer from the Flushingers and Prince of Orange touching our merchants’ ships and goods ; for other matters of France. I know Mr. Secretary Walsingham’s wonted manner is to send your Lordship’s occurrents that come thence. Mr. Secretary Smith lieth still in hard case at his house in Essex, and, as I hear, this day or to-morrow setteth towards the baths in Somersetshire ; the use of his tongue is clean taken from him that he cannot be understood, such is the continuance of the rheum that distilleth from his head downwards.

“Thus, not knowing wherewith else to trouble your Lordship, I most humbly beseech your blessing, with my wonted prayer for your Lordship’s long continuance in all honour, and most perfect health.

“From the Court this Friday at night, the 6th of July, 1576.

“Your Lordship’s most humble and
obedient loving son,

“GILBERT TALBOT.”

Otherwise the family affairs of the Shrewsburys were engrossing enough. The Lennox baby, born at Chatsworth, had, as stated, altered their domestic and social world considerably. My Lady was now the grandmother of a possible queen, a creature having equal right on her father’s side to the crowns of Scotland and England. It was very important that while Lady Shrewsbury still kept up towards the child’s aunt,

Mary, a show of friendliness, she should curry favour on every occasion with the English Queen, who supported the rule of young James of Scotland. It was a nice and delicate game to play, and must have pleased her well. It was not likely now that Mary would ever come into power. Still, strange things happened. If Elizabeth died suddenly Mary might have her day at last, and every act of the Shrewsburys towards her in her captivity would be weighed in her judgment and awards as soon as she was in the seat of government. The two women had hitherto grown very friendly. All manner of confidences must have passed between them, and my Lady's alert ears had supplied her quick tongue with many a bit of scandal which she could retail for the amusement of the royal "guest."

From this period, however, she would practise greater caution. She had recently steered clear of great danger, and was toiling hard for the Queen's smiles. It was well known that those who favoured and fêted Lord Leicester fêted the Queen in proxy. The visit of Leicester to Buxton in 1576 presented itself therefore as a great social chance.

CHAPTER XII

MY LORD LEICESTER'S CURE

MY Lord of Leicester was to have his cure. The physicians insisted upon it. It is chronicled in Gilbert Talbot's letter with all the importance which would attend the bulletins of the health of a king. The Queen never resented a fuss of this kind made over her pampered darling. In his stuffed and padded Court costume, his feathered head-dress, and his jewels one cannot detect in him one of the virile qualities which so dominated her imagination. His treacheries were winked at, his vices condoned, even the people who accused him most violently of the murder of his first wife, Amy Robsart, when in perplexity crawled to his feet, either literally like poor Lady Catherine Grey, or in abject letters like Lady Lennox, who was one of his bitterest accusers and who had suffered under the spies he sent into her very house. Let us for a few moments recall the growth of this personage, this veritable bay-tree. He was just Robert Dudley, a younger son, the fifth of a ruined family lying under attainder—the Dukes of Northumberland. Mary of England restored him to his title, and drew him out of nonentity and poverty by appointing him Master of the Ordnance at the siege of S. Quentin. As soldier and courtier he certainly came into contact with the Princess Elizabeth, whose visits to Court were finally forced upon her

unwilling sister. Elizabeth had scarcely been on the throne a few months before she indulged with much too evident relief in flirtations with him, as a counterblast to the incessant negotiations with the ambassadors of her successive foreign suitors. She coquetted with him in her boat, she kept his portrait in a secret cabinet, she showed off her learning, her airs and graces before him, she danced with him, and when she formally created him Earl of Leicester she "could not refrain from putting her hand in his neck, smilingly tickling him." This honour, by the way, it will be remembered, she pretended to confer on him in order that his rank should fit him for marriage with Mary Queen of Scots, and so avoid the dangers and difficulties to England which would arise from her marriage with Darnley. There never was a pretence so thin. Elizabeth made a great show of her willingness to bestow on another her "brother and best friend, whom she would have married herself had she minded to take a husband." Since she had decided to die a virgin she held that such a procedure in regard to Leicester would "free her mind of all fears and suspicions to be offended by any usurpation before her death, being assured that he was so loving and trusty that he would never suffer any such thing to be attempted in her time." While she openly advertised Leicester as her favourite, she dangled him as a prize over the head of her chief enemy. She always loved playing with fire, and it is well that this time she did not burn her fingers, for Leicester was the complete courtier and could not decide between the two queens. In his eyes Mary had as much chance of ruling England as his present mistress. Mary did not at the beginning of her career in Scotland appear very

anxious for his wooing. All this helped Elizabeth. Creighton clearly takes the view that the latter promoted the Darnley marriage by the very pushing of Leicester's claims. Whether or not he was personally commendable to Mary, it was greatly to his disadvantage, that, as creature of Elizabeth, he should be thrust upon her enemy.

Just at that period Leicester's familiarity towards the Queen touched gross impudence. We see him in the royal tennis-court pausing in a match against the premier peer of England, the Duke of Norfolk, to wipe his face with the handkerchief quickly filched from the Queen's hand as she sat amongst the onlookers. The Duke raged, offered violence, and, unfortunately for royal dignity, Elizabeth's manner showed that she took the part of Leicester. She had already bestowed on him while a commoner the Garter. The Order of St. Michael was his next honour, and he was soon created Master of the Horse, Steward of the Household, Chancellor of Oxford, Ranger of the Forests south of Trent, and, later on, Captain-General of the English forces in the Netherlands. When age and his last illness brooded over him his queen planned for him a last dazzling post—a new creation—in the Lieutenancy of England and Ireland. Despite the scandals attached to his three marriages,¹ he maintained his place in the eyes of

¹ His three wives were : Amy or Anne, daughter and heir to Sir John Robsart ; Douglas, daughter of William Lord Howard of Effingham and widow of John Lord Sheffield, by whom he had one son, Sir Robert Dudley ; and Lettice Knollys, daughter of Sir Francis Knollys and widow of Walter Earl of Essex. Amy Robsart died suddenly at Kenilworth, and he did not even attend her funeral ; Lady Sheffield he repudiated because of his passion for Lettice Knollys, whose death took place under suspicious circumstances. He declared his son by Lady Shef-

Elizabeth, and only in after years seriously earned her displeasure. He had the rare art of "keeping on the right side" of Lord Burghley, between whom and himself a sort of armed neutrality existed, except when mutual advantage found them acting heartily in concert. Leicester, as all his history shows, was, like Buckingham, a gay dog, a ladies' man. Pretty women hovered about him at Court—*vide* the letter from Gilbert Talbot under date May 11, 1573, quoted in full in a previous chapter—he had to keep them at peace not to give offence. He could play with their love, enjoy it, go to utmost lengths, so long as the Queen believed that in his heart no other woman could take her place. He entertained largely, he lived and dressed as befitted his position. It was above all highly important that he should keep his health in order, preserve the elegant lines of his soldier's figure, and defer as long as possible the days when he would, in his own phrase, "grow high-coloured and red-faced."

When he was ordered to Buxton it was imperative that he should be properly received and housed, and not lodged in the low wooden sheds which were used by the ordinary public during their "cure," and where their fare seems to have consisted of "oat cakes, with a viand which the hosts called mutton, but which the guests strongly suspected to be dog."

Buxton waters, under the patronage of St. Anne "of Buckstone" and St. Andrew of Burton, were beset for many years before this with poor crippled pilgrims, who

field to be illegitimate, and she, though married to him, was so frightened by his attempt to remove her by poison, in order that he might wed the widowed Countess of Essex, that, though legally bound to him, she became the wife of Sir Edward Stafford, of Grafton.



Photo by Emery Walker, after the picture in the National Portrait Gallery

ROBERT DUDLEY, EARL OF LEICESTER

left symbols of their gratitude in the various shrines of the place in the way of crutches and candles. When the Cromwell of Henry VIII wiped England of popery these testimonials were all demolished, and he "locked up and sealed the baths and wells . . ." pending the royal permission "to wash" therein. This, however, did not prevent the Earl of Shrewsbury from building a suitable house for patients, and it is thus described by a physician of the day:—

"Joyninge to the chiefe sprynge betweene the river and the bathe is a very goodly house, four square, four stories hye, so well compacte with houses and offices underneath, and above and round about, with a great chamber, and other goodly lodgings to the number of thirty, that it is and will be a bewty to beholde; and very notable for the honourable and worshipful that shall need to repair thither, as also for others.

"Yea, and the porest shall have lodgings and beds hard by for their uses only. The bathes also so beautified with seats round; defended from the ambyent air; and chimneys for fyre to ayre your garments in the bathes side, and other necessities most decent."

Prices for baths varied according to the social position of the patient! An archbishop seems to head the scale with a compulsory payment of £5, while a yeoman only paid twelvecence, and was entitled to as long a cure as the Primate. Lord Leicester, coming in the category of Earls, was charged twenty shillings. One half of the fee went to the doctor in command, the rest towards a fund for the cure of the poorest cripples.

The aforesaid house, which four times sheltered both Mary of Scotland and once at least Lord Leicester, is

now gone ; in place of it is a hotel, and there is no trace of the "pleasant warm bowling-green planted about with large sycamore trees." This, according to another authority, was part of its garden, and it was Gilbert Talbot's duty to entertain his father's dazzling guest and the Queen's favourite in this pleasant spot. During the week of this memorable visit the young man never lost an opportunity of furthering his family's cause and of sounding influential persons at all seasons. He, like others, had constant recourse to Leicester, both by word of mouth and pen. The letter which follows¹ is a typical epistle of the kind which is scattered through the society correspondence of the day.

We see by this that Gilbert was actually at "Buckstones" doing the honours of his father's house there to any distinguished guests, while the Earl, his father, was nailed to his post at Sheffield, and the Countess presumably busying herself with the killing of the fatted calf at Chatsworth in readiness to honour Leicester on his going southward.

She must have hailed this epistle with huge satisfaction, since it definitely announces the Earl's presence at Buxton with his intention of accepting her invitation to Chatsworth, and at the same time assures her of his good offices on behalf of young Lady Lennox. Poor Elizabeth Cavendish was by this time a widow,² almost penniless, and appealing to the Queen for financial support on behalf of the baby Lady Arabella. The letter is addressed to both of Gilbert's parents :—

¹ Hunter's *Hallamshire*.

² Her husband died of consumption within two years of the hasty and romantic wedding at Rufford Abbey.

“My duty, etc,—This morning early I delivered your L.’s packet to my L. of Leicester, who, upon reading thereof, said he would write to your L. by a post that is here, and willed me to send away your lackey. I asked him how long he thought to tarry here, and prayed him to tarry as long as might be. And he said he knew not whether to go to Chatsworth on Tuesday or Wednesday or Thursday come seven nights, but one of those three days without fail. There came some score of fowl here on Saturday, which served here very well yesterday, and will do this three or four days. Sir Hugh Chamley sent hither to my L. of Leicester a very fat beef, which my L. of Leicester bade me go down to see, and to take him to use as I listed ; but I told him I was sure your L. would be angry if I took him ; yet for all this, he would force me to take him ; and so I kept him here in the town till I know your L.’s pleasure what shall be done with him ; he would serve very well for Chatsworth. Bayley thinketh that they will tarry two or three days at Chatsworth. There is no word yet come from my L. of Huntington and my La. whether they will meet my L. of Leicester at Chatsworth or not ; if they do (as he hath written very earnestly to them) I think he will not come to Ashby, but go the next way to Killingworth and there tarry but two or three days only. My L. of Rutland, by reason of the foul afternoon yesterday, lay here all the last night in the chamber where Sir Henry Lea lodged. I showed the letter of my La. Lennox, your daughter, to my L. of Leicester, who said that he thought it were far better for him to defer her suit to her Majesty till his own coming to the Court than otherwise to write to her before ; for that he thinketh her Majesty will suppose

his letter, if he should write, were but at your La.'s request, and so by another letter would straight answer it again, and so it do no great good ; but at his meeting your La. he will (he saith) advise in what sort your La. shall write to the Queen Majesty, which he will carry unto her, and then be as earnest a solicitor therein as ever he was for anything in his life, and he doubteth not to prevail to your La. contention. Tomorrow my L. of Leicester meaneth to go to Sir Peres a Leyes to meet with my L. of Derby, if the weather be any whit fair. And thus most humbly craving your Lo.'s blessing with my wonted prayer for your long continuance in all honour and most perfect health and long life I cease. At Buxton in haste this present Monday before noon.

“Your Lo.'s most humble and obedient son,

“G. TALBOT.

“The Lords do pray your L. to remember their case (of) knives.”¹

There is no further comment from him on the subject of this visit, but later letters will show that it went off smoothly and resulted in benefit to the patient. As for his visit to Chatsworth it appears to have been a triumphant success. Many things were talked out between host, hostess, and guest in the few days of his sojourn. They had many experiences in common—to wit, the insane jealousy and suspicions of their Sovereign. But on this occasion their meeting hatched no unpleasant results in this respect. The Queen her-

¹ Hallamshire knives, or “whittles,” were famous, and the Earl often sent gifts of sets to his friends in these early days of the development of Sheffield cutlery.



*From a photo by Richard Keene, Ltd., Derby, after the picture at Hardwick Hall
By permission of his Grace the Duke of Devonshire*

QUEEN ELIZABETH

self wrote to thank them for their good entertainment of her valued friend. And hereby hangs a little comedy, a mystery. Two letters, evidently of the same date, were dictated by the Queen. The skittish original in the handwriting of Sir Francis Walsingham was not sent. A sedate version of it was the one which the Shrewsburys opened. This is among the Talbot manuscripts. The lively edition remains in the Record Office among the Mary Queen of Scots MSS. for the amusement of posterity. Opinions differ as to the mood in which Elizabeth wrote it.¹ It has been suggested that it was done in a flippant ironical spirit ; it has also been taken as a symptom of wild elation born of Elizabeth's belief that her marriage with Lord Leicester would really be achieved. It seems most likely that she certainly dashed it off in a flippant mood, with the intention of chaffing the serious apprehensive High Steward of England and his wife, and that Lord Burghley, or Walsingham, advised her to desist and to allow a copy to be made, excluding the "larky" passages.

This is what she sent :—

"The Queen to the Earl and Countess of Shrewsbury.

"By the Queen.

"Your most assured loving cousin and sovereign,
Elizabeth R.

"Our very good Cousins,

"Being given to understand from our cousin of Leicester how honourably he was received by you our

¹ Creighton takes the view that this was Elizabeth's elaborate method of flogging the couple at Chatsworth for luring Leicester to Chatsworth, and that she highly disapproved of the visit.

cousin the Countess at Chatsworth, and his diet by you both discharged at Buxtons, but also presented with a very rare present, we should do him great wrong (holding him in that place of favour we do) in case we should not let you understand in what thankful sort we accept the same at your hands, not as done unto him, but to our own self, reputing him as another ourself; and, therefore, ye may assure yourselves, that we taking upon us the debt not as his but as our own, will take care accordingly to discharge the same in such honourable sort as so well-deserving creditors as ye are shall never have cause to think ye have met with an ungrateful debtor. In this acknowledgment of new debts we may not forget our old debt, the same being as great as a sovereign can owe to a subject; when through your loyal and most careful looking to this charge committed to you, both we and our realm enjoy a peaceable government, the best good hope that to any prince on earth can befall: This good hap, then, growing from you, ye might think yourselves most unhappy if you served such a prince as should not be as ready graciously to consider of it as thankfully to acknowledge the same, whereof ye may make full account, to your comfort when time shall serve. Given under our signet in our manor of Greenwich, the 25th day of June, 1577, and in the 19th year of our reign.”

This is what Elizabeth, a sovereign of nineteen years' standing, a woman over forty years of age, wanted to send :—

“Being given to understand from our cousin of Leicester how honourably he was lately received and used by you, our Cousin the Countess of Chatsworth,

and how his diet is by you both discharged at Buxtons, we should do him great wrong (holding him in that place of favour we do) in case we should not let you understand in how thankful sort we accept the same at both your hands—which we do not acknowledge to be done unto him but unto ourselves; and therefore do mean to take upon us the debt and to acknowledge you both as creditors, so you can be content to accept us for debtor, wherein is the danger unless you cut off some part of the large allowance of diet you give him, lest otherwise the debt thereby may grow to be so great as we shall not be able to discharge the same, and so become bankrupt, and therefore we think it meet for the saving of our credit to prescribe unto you a proportion of diet which we mean in no case you shall exceed, and that is to allow him by the day of his meat two ounces of flesh referring the quality to yourselves, so as you exceed not the quantity; and for his drink one-twentieth of a pint of wine to comfort his stomach and as much of St. Anne's sacred water as he lusteth to drink. On festival days, as is fit for a man of his quality, we can be content you shall enlarge his diet by allowing unto him for his dinner the shoulder of a wren, and for his supper a leg of the same, besides his ordinary ounces. The like proportion we mean you shall allow unto our brother of Warwick,¹ saying that we think it meet, in respect that his body is more replete than his brother's, that the wren's leg allowed at supper on festival days be abated; for that light suppers agreeth but with the rules of physic. This

¹ Ambrose Earl of Warwick, to whom Lord Leicester bequeathed his estates, only making his own son, Robert Dudley, heir in the second place.

order our meaning is you shall inviolably observe, and so you may right well assure yourselves of a most thankful debtor to so well-deserving creditors."

This letter is endorsed "M. of her Mates lres to the Earl and Countess of Shrewsbury, of thanks for the good usage of my L. of Lec."

Indeed, it was well that it was not sent. From one point of view it reads suspiciously like a skit devised by Elizabeth on the statements periodically sent her by Lord Shrewsbury with regard to the "diet" of the Queen of Scots, and the number of courses and dishes allowed her on festival days.

The Earl writes presently to the Queen in his wife's name, on this, his own, and other matters. His tone is artful, astute, and conventional :—

"May it please your most excellent Majesty,

"The comfortable letters I lately received, of your own blessed handwriting, made me by oft looking on them, think my happiness more than any service (were it never so perfect) could merit ; and myself more bounden to your Highness for the same than by writing I can express. And as it pleased your Majesty to write with assured confidence you have in my fidelity, and safe keeping of this lady, doubting nothing but lest her fair speech deceive me, so I am sure, although it please your Majesty to warn¹ me of her, yet doth your wisdom see well enough by my many years' service past any inclination to her was never further, nor otherwise than of her Majesty's service. . . .

¹ In sending her thanks for Leicester's entertainment Elizabeth apparently despatched also to Shrewsbury a separate letter embodying her old suspicious fears.

"Nor have I cause to trust her. Were her speech fair or crabbed my only respect hath been, is still, and so shall continue, to the duty I owe unto your Majesty. . . . I have her forthcoming at your Majesty's commandment. . . .

"And may it now further please your Majesty to license my wife and me humbly to acknowledge ourselves the more bound to your Majesty, as well as for the comfortable message Mr. Julio brought us lately from your Majesty, as that it pleased your Majesty to vouchsafe our rude and gross entertainment of our devout friend, my kinsman, my Lord of Leicester; which although in respect of our duties to your Majesty and the great goodwill we bear to him, is not so well as it ought to be, yet are we sure it contenteth him, and displeaseth not your Majesty, that he is the welcomed friend to us of all others. My wife also bids me yield her humble thanks to your Majesty . . . and now (since we can do no more, nor your Highness have no more of us than our true and faithful hearts and service, wherein we will spend our lives and all we have, if your Majesty command it) we pray to God for your most excellent Majesty, as we are bounden. Sheffield, 4th of July, 1577.

"Your Majesty's most humble, faithful servant,

"GEORGE SHREWSBURY."

In this year, whether or no the weather specially tended to develop rheumatism or aggravate it, there seems to have been a positive rush of great persons to Buxton. A fortnight later Lord Burghley wrote to inform the Shrewsburys of his expedition to the baths and, like others, to beg for hospitality.

"I am now thoroughly licensed by her Majesty to come thither with as much speed as my old crazed body will suffer me. And, because I doubt your Lordship is and shall be pressed with many other like suits for your favour, to have the use of some lodgings there, I am bold at the present to send this my letter by post"—that is to say, by special messenger. He goes on: "I am to have in my company but Mr. Roger Manners and my son, Thomas Cecil, for whom I am also to interest your Lordship to procure them, by your commandment, some lodging as your Lordship shall please."

The Earl of Sussex who preferred a doughty cure, drinking as much as three pints a day, made tender enquiries as to the result of the water on the Lord Treasurer. As to its effects on Lord Leicester, one can judge best by this letter from a friend to the Shrewsburys—Richard Topclyffe, a tremendous Protestant, by the way, and hunter of "mass-mongers and recusants," to the Countess. He reassures her fully as to the health of the guest who had just quitted Chatsworth, quotes Leicester's promise to further her welfare and that of her young stepsons, Henry and Edward Talbot, his kinsmen:—

"We did yesternight come to Ricote, my Lo. Norris's, where late did arrive the Countesses of Bedford and Cumberland and the Earl of Cumberland, the Lord Wharton and his wife. The fat Earl¹ cometh this day, my L. of Leicester being departed towards the Court, to Sir Thomas Gresham's, thirty-three miles hence (whereby you may perceive of his health), only a little

¹ Could this be the Earl of Warwick, who, as suggested in Elizabeth's skittish letter just quoted, had been invited to Chatsworth with Lord Leicester?

troubled with a boil drawing to a head in the calf of the leg, which maketh him use his litter. The Countess kept him long waiting, asking if Buxton sent sound men halting home. But I never did hear him commend the place, nor the entertainment half so much : and did swear that he wished he had tarried three weeks longer with his charge . . . but, saith he, it hath, and would have cost my friends deeply. His L. wished her Majesty would progress to Grafton and Killingworth, which condition he would see Buxton this summer again. But the next year is threatened that journey. I can send your La. no more unpleasant news but that his Lo. hath said with me in vows that he will be as tender over your Lord and yourself, and both yours, as over his own health : and my Lo. is very careful over his two young cousins, Mr. Ed. and Mr. Hen., to have them placed at Oxford, wishing that he may find of his kindred to work his goodwill upon, as he hath done hitherto on many unthankful persons. Good madam, further you my good Lo., your husband's disposition that way for your son Charles. . . . And therewith I end ; in very humble sort. The 9th of July, 1577.

“Your La. ever at command,

“RIC. TOPCLIFFE.”¹

Everything as regards the Talbot and Cavendish family was going well—merrily as a marriage-bell, so far as “Bess” was concerned. The widowhood of her youngest daughter, Lady Lennox, did not affect her. It was only one more tool to her hand in scheming for the Queen's favour, the Queen's largesse, and in balanc-

¹ Hunter's *Hallamshire*.

ing any foolish and unwise notions which the Countess might have previously entertained in regard to Queen Mary's cause.

Mary, it may be recalled here, had had more than one chance of marriage with Lord Leicester. He had, so to speak, meandered in and out of her affairs, now as suitor, now as go-between. As recently as 1574, three years previous to his Buxton visit, he seems for the second time to have entertained thoughts of making her an offer of marriage, whereas previously he had used his influence on behalf of the Duke of Norfolk's wooing, and again with a view to averting his condemnation. In 1574 Mary was so firmly impressed with his attitude towards her that she advised her relations in France to pave the way for friendly overtures with a gift to Leicester. She was also about this time very anxious to refurbish her wardrobe, and took a great interest in securing brilliant and becoming materials and millinery of the kind most in vogue: "Send by and by Jean de Compiègne," she writes, "and let him bring me patterns of dresses and samples of cloth of gold and silver and silk, the most beautiful and rare that are worn at Court, to learn my pleasure about them. Order Poissy to make me a couple of headdresses, with a crown of gold and silver, such as they have formerly made for me; and tell Breton to remember his promise, and obtain for me from Italy the newest fashions in headdresses, and veils and ribbons, with gold and silver. . . ." There was no blindness about the way she regarded the possibility of such a marriage. She held that Leicester's motives were anything but romantic or altruistic. But if so powerful a suitor could be secured, and above all seduced from allegiance to Elizabeth, Mary had no

objection to the match. Her letters to France are full of allusions to him :—¹

“Leicester talks over M. de La Mothe to persuade him that he is wholly for me, and endeavours to gain over Walsingham my mortal enemy to this effect.”

And again : “M. de La Mothe advises me to entreat that my cousin of Guise, my grandmother and yours, will write some civil letters to Leicester, thanking him for his courtesy to me, as if he had done much for me, and by the same medium send him some handsome present, which will do me much good. He takes great delight in furniture ; if you send him some crystal cup in your name, and allow me to pay for it, or some fine Turkey carpet, or such like as you may think most fitting, it will perhaps save me this winter, and will make him much ashamed, or suspected by his mistress, and all will assist me. For he intends to make me speak of marriage or die, as it is said, so that either he or his brother may have to do with this crown. I beseech you try if such small device can save me and I shall entertain him with the other, at a distance.”

How this letter reveals her impulse for romance, her pathetic, dogged attempts to believe herself all-powerful !

Leicester, naturally, was far too cautious to take the tremendous risk involved, and contented himself with keeping at a distance and in exchanging polite and friendly letters with the Shrewsburys, such as the one quoted on page 170. He was an adept at this kind of sugary testimonial. Certainly no finer instance could

¹ Letters of Mary Queen of Scots, quoted by Leader.

be given in support of the dignity, virtue, and innocence of an intriguing and busy lady from the pen of an arch-courtier—a man accused of wife-murder, seduction, poisoning, and political treachery.

CHAPTER XIII

THE DIVIDED WAY

SEEING that my Lady of Shrewsbury had triumphantly surmounted one of the greatest dangers she had ever drawn upon herself and hers, one can safely assume that after the foregoing letter she was in a tolerably prancing and jovial temper. Socially she really was for the moment a much more important item to be reckoned with than Mary Queen of Scots herself. All the difficulties of the past two years had only served to bring her into closer touch with both queens. Meantime she was a rich and honoured lady with a great many irons in the fire, and her wants and requirements were legion. She still wanted ale and wood and stone, she could not spend all her valuable time dancing attendance upon Mary, or sharing the dull semi-military routine of Sheffield Castle and Sheffield Lodge. She went to her beloved Chatsworth, and husband and wife exchanged letters. Here is a wistful appreciation from him :—

“My Sweetheart,—Your true and faithful zeal you bear me is more comfortable to me than anything I can think upon, and I give God thanks daily for his benefits he hath bestowed on me, and greatest cause I have to give him thanks that he hath sent me you in my old years to comfort me withal. Your coming I shall think

long for, and shall send on Friday your litter horses and on Saturday morning I will send my folks, because Friday they will be desirous to be at Rotherham Fair.

“It appears by my sister Wingfield’s letter there is bruit of this Queen’s going from me. I thank you for sending it me, which I return again, and will not show it till you may speak it yourself what you hear; and I have sent you John Knifton’s letter, that Lord brought me, that you may perceive what is [?bruited] of the young King. I thank you for your fat capon and it shall be baked, and kept cold and untouched until my sweetheart come; guess you who it is. I have sent you a cock that was given to me, which is all the dainties I have here.

“I have written to Sellars to send every week a quarter of rye for this ten weeks, which will be as much as I know will be had there, and ten quarters of barley, which will be all that I can spare you. Farewell, my sweet true none and faithful wife.

“All yours,

“SHREWSBURY.”¹

Here is a letter from her to him, brisk, tart, affectionate all at once :—

“My dear heart,

“I have sent your letters again and thank you for them; they require no answer; but when you write remember to thank him for them. If you cannot get my timber carried I must be without it though I greatly want it; but if it would please you to command Hebert or any other, to move your tenants to bring it, I ken

¹ Hunter’s *Hallamshire*.

they will not deny to do it. I pray you let me know if I shall have the ton of iron. If you cannot spare it I must make shift to get it elsewhere, for I may not now want it. You promised to send me money afore this time to buy oxen, but I see, out of sight out of mind with you.

“My son Gilbert has been very ill in his bed ever since he came from Sheffield: I think it is his old disease; he is now, I thank God, somewhat better and she very well. I will send you the bill of my wood stuff: I pray you let it be sent to Joseph, that he may be sure to receive all. I thank you for taking order for the carriage of it in Hardwick; if you would command, your waggoner might bring it thither: I think it would be safest carried. Here is neither malt nor hops. The malt come last is so very ill and stinking, as Hawkes thinks none of my workmen will drink it. Show this letter to my friend and then return it. I think you will take no discharge at Zouch’s hands nor the rest. You may work still in despite of them; the law is on your side.¹ It cannot be but that you shall have the Queen’s consent to remove hither; therefore if you would have things in readiness for your provision, you might the sooner come. Come either before Midsummer or not this year; for any provision you have yet you might have come as well as at Easter as at this day. Here is yet no manner of provision more than a little drink, which makes me to think you mind not to come. God send my jewel health.

“Your faithful wife

“E. SHREWSBURY.”

¹ The Earl and Sir John Zouch, a kinsman of the Countess, were contesting the right to sell some Derbyshire lead mines.

“Saturday morn.

“I have sent you lettuce for that you love them ; and every second day some is sent to your charge and you. I have nothing else to send. Let me hear how you, your charge and love do, and commend me I pray you. It were well you sent four or five pieces of the great hangings that they might be put up ; and some carpets. I wish you would have things in that readiness that you might come either three or four days after you hear from Court. Write to Baldwin to call on my Lord Treasurer for answer of your letters.” .

The expression in the postscript “your charge and love” has been variously interpreted by historians. It is utterly inconceivable that, as suggested, Lady Shrewsbury should have indicated Mary Queen of Scots by the last word. Had she wished to bring an accusation of this kind against her husband she would not immediately add her desire that he should join her as soon as possible. It is not unlikely that this perplexing sentence should run, “Let me hear how you, your charge, and (our) love do,” the “love” probably signifying a child or grandchild then with the Earl. Similarly the words “God send my jewel health” may apply to the same child, for in after years she uses this term of endearment almost exclusively in speaking of her precious grandchild, Arabella Stuart. Her peremptory request for “great hangings and carpets” is rather interesting, because a previous family letter, not yet included, gives a picture of the Earl’s parsimony in these details. This occurs as early as two years before the date of the above letters ; and two long epistles from Gilbert to his step-mother show, first, how the long strain of his duties was

telling upon the Earl, and, secondly, the unfavourable contrast produced on the minds of their children by the manner in which they were treated respectively by father and mother.

Gilbert, at Sheffield in 1575, describes the atmosphere of the house as utterly uncongenial. He is longing to be away and to have his own home. Lady Shrewsbury was away, probably at Chatsworth.¹

“My L. is continually pestered with his wonted business, and is very often in exceeding choler of slight occasion ; a great grief to them that loves him to see him hurt himself so much. He now speaketh nothing of my going to house, and I fear would be contented with silence to pass it over ; but I have great hope in your La. at your coming, and in all my life I never longed for anything so much as to be from hence ; truly, Madame, I rather wish myself a ploughman than here to continue.”

Her Ladyship came and went, but does not seem to have had much effect in softening her lord. Soon afterwards Gilbert writes again, oppressed by his father's lack of lavishness in regard to the fitting out of his son's home—an attitude which he compares unfavourably with the generous methods of the stepmother.²

“Madame, where it hath pleased your La. to bestow on us a great deal of furniture towards house we can but by our prayers for your La. show ourselves dutiful as well for this as all other your La. continual benefits towards us, whereof we can never fail so long as it shall please God to continue His grace towards us. Pre-

¹ Hunter's *Hallamshire*.

² *Ibid.*

sently after your La. departure from hence my Lord appointed him of the wardrobe to deliver us the tester and curtains of the old green and red bed of velvet and satin that your La. did see ; and the cloth bed tester and curtains we now lie in, and two very old counterpanes of tapestry ; and forbad him to deliver the bed of cloth of gold and tawny velvet that your La. saw. That which your La. hath given us is more worth than all that is at Goodrich,¹ or here of my Lord's bestowing. On Wednesday my Lord went hence. Cooks brought in a piece of housewife's cloth nothing dearer than twelve pence the yard, and so was holden ; which Cooks told my Lord would very well serve my wife to make sheets, bore cloths and such like : which my L. at the very first yielded unto, and bade him carry it to Stele to measure, into the outer chamber, and he said he thought it very dear of that price, and thereupon my L. refused to buy it. . . . Thus I beseech your La. most humbly of your blessing to your little fellow² and myself who is very well, thanks be to God. . . .

"Sheffield, this Friday, 13th of October, 1575."

Here for the first time is the beginning of real dissension in the family. The Earl's own son murmurs against him, and the wife, being the daughter of her husband's stepmother, would naturally share his resentment towards the soldierly official towards whom she stood in such a very delicate double relationship. The young couple are placed in a very difficult position henceforth between Earl and Countess, and their letters

¹ Goodrich Castle, in Herefordshire ; also one of the Shrewsbury properties at this date.

² His little son.



*Photo by Richard Keene, Ltd., Derby, after the painting at Hardwick Hall
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ELIZABETH COUNTESS OF SHREWSBURY

show the growing jealousy of her absence and her independence in the Earl's mind. The postscript strikes a tenderer note in the allusion to the childish days of the "lyttell fellow"—George, son and heir of Gilbert and Mary Talbot—and his awe of his "Lady Danmode" (Grandmother).

"My duty, most humble rem. R. Ho., my most singular good La. This day my Lo. intendeth to go to Worsopp; to-morrow to Rufford; and on Saturday hither again. He was not so inquisitive of me touching your La. since my last being at Chatsworth, as he was the time before; only he hath asked me many times when I thought your La. would be here: whereto I have answered sometimes that your La. was so ill at ease with the rheumatism as you knew not when God would make you able; other times, that I thought when your La. were well, you would desire to stay for some months if he would give you leave; for you assuredly thought my Lo. was better pleased with your absence than presence. Whereunto he replied very earnestly the contrary in such manner as he hath done heretofore when I have told him the like. I found occasion to tell him that your La. meant not to hold Owen as your groom any longer, since it was his pleasure to be so offended with him: howbeit (I said) your La. told me that you knew not what offence he had committed, nor other by him at all than that he was a simple, true man, and that you would be glad to understand something to lay to his charge when you should turn him out of your service. But he answered no other than that it was his will for divers causes which he would not utter. Further, I said your La. told me you meant to take

some wise fellow as your groom that should not be so simple as Owen was, but one who had been in service heretofore and knew what were fit and belonged to him to do in that service. Quoth he: 'I believe she will take none of my putting to her.' Since that time he gave no occasion of speech of your La., and indeed I have not been very much with him these four or five days, for he had much business with others. He is nothing so merry in my judgment as he was the last week; but I assure your La. I know not any cause at all. No other thing I know worthy of your La. knowledge at this present. Therefore, with most humble desire of your La. blessings to me and mine, and our prayer for your La. continuance in all honour, most perfect health and felicity, I cease.

"Sheffield, this present Thursday, 1st August, 1577.

"Your La. most humble and obedient
loving children,

"GILBERT TALBOT, M. TALBOT.

"George is very well, I thank God: he drinketh every day to La. Grandmother, rideth to her often, but yet within the Court; and if he have any spice, I tell him La. Grandmother is come and will see him; which he then will either quickly hide or quickly eat, and then asks where La. Danmode is."

Here it is very distinctly set forth, the growing distrust, the little suspicions nursed by husband and wife: "He was not so inquisitive of me touching your Ladyship." "He asked me divers times when I thought your Ladyship would be here." "You assuredly thought that my Lord was better pleased with your absence than presence." And in expressing his mother's willingness

to send away one of her grooms, since her lord was so offended with him, though she would gladly know of some offence to allege in giving the man his dismissal, he shows that my Lord still is mistrustful. "She'll take no groom that I recommend to her" is his morose comment.

Another long letter from Gilbert the go-between gives the quarrel a more serious colour. Apparently it is the absurd old matter of household tapestries which is the immediate bone of contention. In vulgar phrase, there seems to have been a regular "row" over some embroiderers—upholsterer's men as they would now be called—at Sheffield Lodge, who had been turned adrift instead of being carefully housed while at their work. The Earl's steward, one Dickenson, evidently acted against express orders in his zeal to keep at a distance all persons who were not actually of the household and who might convey letters or messages to the captive. The Earl had expressed himself forcibly and the Countess could not forget his words. But she had not restrained her tongue either, and he had retorted that she scolded "like one that came from the Bank." He does not like the groom, Owen (alluded to in the letter just quoted), and couples him with the embroiderer's men. But the thing which most hurts him is that his wife should have left Sheffield, whither he is bound from Bolsover, the very day he arrives. He cannot forgive it, in spite of her suggestion that he should combine some business he has to transact in the Peak district with a visit to her at Chatsworth. He is, moreover, morbidly sensitive about the whole position, and thinks that his wife's departure will make a very bad impression upon his household. Gilbert pleads her love

and devotion, and draws a vivid picture of her distress. The Earl melts ; he concedes her love ; he reiterates all he has done for her, all he has "bestowed." And lastly he curses her building projects which take her so constantly away from him.

"My duty most humbly remembered. I trust your La. will pardon me in writing plainly and truly, although it be both bluntly and tediously. I met my L. at Bolsover yesterday about one of the clock, who at the very first was rather desirous to hear from hence than to enquire of Killingworth. Quoth he, 'Gilbert, what talk had my wife with you?' 'Marry, my L.,' quoth I, 'it hath pleased her to talk with me once or twice since my coming, but the matter she most spoke of is no small discomfort for me to understand.' Then he was very desirous and bade me tell him what. I began : 'Truly, Sir, with as grieved a mind as ever I saw woman in my life, she told me your L. was vehemently offended with her, in such sort, and with so many words and shows in your anger of evil will towards her, as thereby your L. said you could not but seem doubtful that all his wonted love and affection is clean turned to the contrary ; for your L. further said, you had given him no cause at all to be offended.' You hearing that your embroiderers were kept out of the Lodge from their beds by John Dickenson's command said to my L. these words in the morning, 'Now did you give command that the embroiderers should be kept out of the Lodge?' and my L. answered 'No.' 'Then,' quoth your La., 'they were kept from their beds there yesternight ; and he that did so said John Dickenson had given that express command.' Which my L. said was a lie. And he said



*From a photo by Richard Keene, Ltd., Derby, after the picture at Hardwick Hall
By permission of his Grace the Duke of Devonshire*

GEORGE TALBOT, SIXTH EARL OF SHREWSBURY

As signed to George Talbot.
George Talbot
6th Earl of Shrewsbury

it was utterly untrue. And so I would have gone on to have told the rest; how your La. willed him to enquire whether they were not in this manner kept out or no: but his proceeding into vehement choler and hard speeches he cut me off, saying it was to no purposs to hear any recital of this matter, for if he listed he said he could remember cruel speeches your La. used to him, 'which were such as,' quoth he, 'I was forced to tell her, she scolded like one that came from the Bank.'¹ Then, Gilbert,' said he, 'judge whether I had cause or not. Well,' quoth he, 'I will speak no more of this matter: but she hath such a sort of varlets about her as never ceaseth carrying tales'; and then uttered cruel words against Owen chiefly and the embroiderers, over long to trouble your La. with. So being alighted from his horse all this while, said, 'Let us get up and be gone; and I shall have enough to do when I come home.' Then quoth I, 'I think my La. be at Chatsworth by this time.' 'What!' quoth he, 'is she gone from Sheffield?' I answered, 'By nine of the clock.' Whereupon he seemed to marvel greatly, and said, 'Is her malice such that she would not tarry one night for my coming?' I answered that your La. told me that he was contented at your first coming you should go as yesterday: which he swore he never heard of. 'Then,' quoth I, 'my La. further told me that when your L. was contented for her departure that day, he said that he had business in the Peake and would shortly come thither, and lie at Chatsworth.' Quoth he, 'Her going away thus giveth me small cause to come to Chatsworth,' but answered not whether he said so or not. But I assure your La. before God,

¹ The mouth of a coal-pit.

he was and is greatly offended with your going hence yesterday.

“After he had seen all his grounds about Bolsover, and was coming into the way homewards, he began with me again saying that all the house might discern your Ladyship’s stomach against him by your departure before his coming. I answered beside what I said before, that your La. said you had very great and earnest business as well at Chatsworth for your things there, as to deal with certain freeholders for Sir Thomas Stanhope, but he allowed not any reason or cause, but was exceeding angry for the same. Whereupon I spake at large which I beseech your La. to pardon my tediousness in repeating thereof, or at least the most thereof. Quoth I, ‘I pray your L. give leave to tell you plainly what I gathered by my Lady. I see she is so grieved and vexed in mind as I protest to God I never saw any woman more in my life; and after she told me how without any cause at all your L. uttered most cruel and bitter speeches against her, when she all the while never uttered any undutiful word, and had particularly imparted the whole matter, she plainly declared unto me that she thought your L. heart was withdrawn from her, and all your affection and love to hate and evil will’: saying that you took it as your cross that so contrary to your deservings he adjudged of you, applinge¹ the manifold shows which you so indefinitely have made proof; and so forgot no earnest protestations that your La. pleased to utter to me of your dear affection and love to him both in health and sickness, taking it upon your soul that you wished his griefs were on yourself to disburden and quit him of [them].

¹ Probably “detailing” or “appealing to.”

“And quoth I, ‘My L., when she told me of this her dear love towards you, and now how your L. hath requited her, she was in such perplexity as I never saw woman’: and concluded, that your La. speech was that now you know he thought himself most happy when you were absent from, and most unhappy when you were with him. And this, I assure your La., he heeded; and although I cannot say his very word was that he had injured and wronged you, yet both by his countenance and words it plainly showed the same, and [he] answered, ‘I know,’ quoth he, ‘her love hath been great to me: and mine hath been and is as great to her: for what can a man do more for his wife than I have done and daily do for her?’ And so reckoned at large, your La. may think with the most, what he hath given and bestowed. Whereunto I could not otherwise reply than thus. Quoth I, ‘My L., she were to blame if she considered not these things: but I gather plainly by her speech to me that she thinketh notwithstanding that your heart is hardened against her, as I have once or twice already told your Lordship, and that you love them that love not her, and believe those about you which hateth her.’ And at your departure I said that your La. told me that you verily thought my L. was gladder of your absence than presence. Wherein, I assure your La., he deeply protested the contrary: and said, ‘Gilbert, you know the contrary; and how often I have cursed the buildings at Chatsworth for want of her company: but [quoth he] you see she careth not for my company by going away. I would not have done so to her. . . .’ But after this he talked not much; but I know it pinched him, and on my conscience I think so; but what effects will follow God knoweth.

"I will write again to your La. what I find by him this day ; for yesternight having not talked with any but myself, I know that his heart desireth reëconciliation if he wist which way to bring it to pass. Living God grant it, and make his heart turn to your comfort in all things.

"To-morrow he will send me to Derby about Sir Thomas Stanhope's matter. I most humbly beseech your La. blessing to me and mine. George rejoiced so greatly yesternight at my L. coming home, as I could not have believed if I had not seen it. Sunday at nine of the clock. For God's sake, Madame, pardon my very tedious and evil favoured scribbling.

"Your La. most humble and obedient loving son,
"GILBERT TALBOT."

"The hasty letter from Sir John Constable was to advertise that there are two Scots that travel with linen cloths to sell, that gave letters of importance to this Queen : one of them is brother to Curle. My L. Huntington's letter was refusal of land that my L. offered him to sell."

"What effects will follow God knoweth ! " Certainly 1577 was an unhappy year for the house of Shrewsbury. "This world," as Lord Leicester says in one of his letters to the great Earl, "is wholly given to reports and bruits of all sorts." And these conjugal bickerings, as the Earl foresaw, would beget reports which, added to the "bruits" he had to face almost daily anent his prisoner, would certainly crush him and his wife. For the present the latter rumours were reviving in such force that he could not stop to think of his private affairs. In his letter to his wife—the first letter quoted in this

chapter—he had alluded to one of these “bruits,” and his apprehensions naturally made him greatly desire the companionship of his Bess.

These rumours were no laughing matter. Affairs in the Netherlands were now complicating England’s foreign policy, and the rumour of the wooing of Mary of Scotland by the gallant Don John of Austria caused all sorts of suspicions of her release. For this audacious and foolhardy soldier had projected a programme of exploits which included the subjugation of the Low Countries, the conquest of England, and, through Mary, the sovereignty over it and the restoration of the Romish faith. My Lord Treasurer promptly indited the following to Mary’s gaoler :—

“ My very good Lord,

“ I cannot but continue my thanks for all your liberal courtesies, praying your Lordship to assure yourself of my poor but yet assured friendship while I live. At my coming to the Court I found such alarm by news directly written from France, and from the Low Countries, of the Queen of Scots’ escape, either already made or very shortly to be attempted, as (surely knowing, as I did, your circumspection in keeping of her, and hearing all things in that country about you very quiet, and free from such dangers) I was bold to make small account of the news, although her Majesty, and the Council here, were therewith perplexed. And though time doth try these news for anything already done false, yet the noise thereof, and the doubt that her Majesty halts for secret hidden practices, to be wrought rather by corruption of some of yours whom you shall trust than by open force, moveth her Majesty to warn

your Lordship, as she said she would write to your Lordship that you continue, or rather increase, your vigilancy . . . ; and as I think your Lordship hath carried your charge to Chatsworth, so I think that house a very meet bourn for good preservation thereof; having no town of resort where any ambushes . . . may lie."

Shrewsbury had removed Mary to Chatsworth during the late summer of 1577, and his motive in applying for leave to do so was apparently not unmixed with an earnest desire for that "reconciliation" at which Gilbert hinted. There was, besides, a very potent reason for the *rapprochement* of husband and wife. On Gilbert and Mary Talbot great sorrow had fallen. The adored baby son George, the "lytell fellow," died suddenly. The Earl tells it to Burghley. He writes from Sheffield briefly, incoherently. The loss hits him very hard, and he acknowledges that this child is his best beloved, the Queen's Majesty only excepted. In fear of the effect of the blow upon his excitable wife he suggests that Burghley's reply and condolences should be addressed to her, and so help to "rule" and control her.

"My very good Lord,—When it pleased God of His goodness yesternight a little before supper to visit suddenly my dearest jewel under God next to my Sovereign, with mortality of sickness, and that it hath pleased God of his goodness to take that sweet babe from me, he surely was a toward child. I thought it rather by myself than by common report you should understand it from me, that though it nips me near, yet the fear I have of God and the dutiful care to discharge

my duty and trust my mistress puts me in, makes me now that he is gone to put away needless care and to look about me that I am put in trust withal—and, my Lord, because I doubt my wife will show more folly than need requires, I pray your Lordship write your letter to her, which I hope will greatly rule her. So wishing to your Lordship perfect health, I take my leave. Sheffield, 12th of August, 1577.

“Your Lordship’s assured friend,

“G. SHREWSBURY.”¹

To Walsingham the Earl also announces this news, adding, “Howbeit, I do not willingly obey unto His will who took him, who only lent him me, without grudging thereat; but my wife (although she acknowledge no less) is not so well able to rule her passions, and hath driven herself into such case by her continual weeping, as it likes to breed in her further inconvenience.” Wherefore he is particularly anxious to join her at Chatsworth, and begs that the Queen shall be “moved” for the requisite permission.

This visit was ended by the beginning of November, when Queen Mary was once more bundled back to Sheffield. At this time she seems to have been on the best of terms with Earl and Countess, and ready to do them every kindness in her power. For instance, she sent to France for a bed for them. But as this was not at the moment acceptable she mentions in a letter her intention to “fulfil my promise by another bed of finer stuff.” It came to her knowledge that they required half a dozen great hall candlesticks such as those “made at Crotelles,” whereupon she sent for “the largest,

¹ Hunter’s *Hallamshire*.

richest, and best made." These were to be sent among articles ordered by her servants, "so that they may create no suspicion."

It is sometimes hard to distinguish from her bribes the presents Mary made out of sheer generosity.

CHAPTER XIV

“BRUITS”

IN a letter quoted in the previous chapter Lord Burghley had told Lord Shrewsbury that the Queen herself would write to him on the subject of the new-old rumours about Mary's escape. Elizabeth, of course, did write, and very seriously, about these reports “from sundry places beyond the sea,” and in that letter (of September, 1577) she gave her servant full powers to use his own discretion in making things secure. But by the spring of 1578 she was not quite so sure of him. The mischief-making at Court had done its usual work. The Queen was very cruelly placed always between two parties—Mary's friends and Mary's enemies. To all, as her courtiers, she must preserve a certain show of grace and unswerving discretion, holding always the balance between the Argus-eyed alertness of the first and the many-winged suspicions of the last. These suspicions were often grossly exaggerated. There were some at least who desired the prisoner's freedom, but not her usurpation of the English throne and a third religious revolution. On the other hand, there were men, who, though powerful under Elizabeth, could quickly have transferred their allegiance to the other sovereign. Again, at all hours “posts” from various ports could bring in secret information under the excellently inclusive system organised by Elizabeth's chief adviser.

Tugged this way and that in her fears for the stability of the kingdom, and at times driven to a pitch of intense alarm, the Queen's confidence in the capacity of the Earl at Sheffield varied according to the tales poured into her ear.

A crisis of this kind had been slowly brewing since the autumn, till in the opening of this year it was actually decided to remove Mary to Leicestershire, and place her under the roof and guard of Lord Huntingdon. Everything was arranged, even down to the despatch of the usual warnings to the surrounding officials of the counties through which the Scots Queen must pass. And then—the usual hitch. Shrewsbury, of course, scented trouble and disgrace, and before definite orders could reach him as to the change, he wrote to the Queen: "To answer somewhat," he rightly says, "in this letter is part of my duty, lest my silence should breed suspicion." And no wonder! For "I am informed that there are reports . . . that I am too much at the devotion of this lady, and so the less to be trusted, and that it was considered better to dispose her elsewhere out of my custody, to my dishonour and disgrace." He pleads stoutly, as always, for the recognition of his single-heartedness and loyalty. He desires only "to be acquitted of blame by the Queen's own goodness." He challenges her equity and good faith: "I presume with your favour not to excuse myself, but to be cleared thereof by your own just judgment."

He points out that had he desired to espouse Mary's cause he might have done so far earlier in the day:—

"When her liberty was sought, and her case pleaded

with sword in hand, herself in force enough as she supposed to achieve her highest enterprise, if any hope had been to her of my inclination that way I might have had an office at her hand with little reward as the greatest traitor they had, and been offered golden mountains.” But even Mary, as he points out, knows her ground, and would not attempt to approach him : “ She was without hope of me and durst reveal nothing to me.” He hates the notion of any upheaval in the realm : “ A change bringeth nothing but destruction of him that desireth it.”

The Queen, after her usual custom after writing a letter of admonition, softened it down by a kind and rather contradictory little message, to which he alludes in a postscript : “ Thanks for your gracious messages by my son Gylbard, among others, that I should not credit bruits, but you would be careful of me.” Elizabeth also included gracious messages to his “ daughter Lynox and her child,” the which, he assured the Queen, were a great comfort to Lady Shrewsbury.

For the rest, how could the poor fellow help believing “ bruits ” ? This kind of gracious royal message was very well in its way, but he must have known that it amounted to nothing. There arose, as he was well aware, other kinds of rumours concerning him and his which were much less mendacious, though they were probably grossly increased by scandal-mongers.

Family correspondence has proved how strained were the conjugal relations of Earl and Countess, and how a barrier beginning, seemingly, with a foundation no less tangible than an armful of tapestries (but sub-

sequently solidified by the sheer masonry of Chatsworth) had grown up between them. All matters of private dispute were complicated by their own difficulties in regard to the tenants of their various estates and any neighbours with whom they were on bad terms. Little by little the fact that the house of Shrewsbury was not at peace with itself must penetrate to the greater world. Servants carried the news into the county. If my Lord blazed and my Lady retorted fiercely and shrilly, matters could not be kept within four walls. And so, though it belongs to a year later than the crisis which now brooded, a very long letter is here inserted because it is so pertinent to the affairs of the Talbots and Cavendishes. Without going needlessly into business details here, it must be explained that all the disputes with tenants, etc., to which the letter alludes, were calculated from the Queen's point of view to disaffect the people in the immediate neighbourhood of the Earl, and give them ground for opposing him and furthering the cause of Mary merely out of spiteful motives. Certain tenants complained, it seems, that they had been turned out of properties leased to them by the Earl, and actually carried the matter up to the Lords of the Council for their arbitration. The Lords took no violent action in the matter, while the Earl denied the charges, and brought countercharge of ill-treatment. Eventually, after correspondence and discussion, the Council discharged the complainants without punishment beyond a little admonition; and after due examination of the man Higgenbotham mentioned in this letter, decided that his offence was exaggerated, and recommended him to the Earl's clemency. Eventually the unfortunate Earl had to give in and reinstate his restive

men of Glossopdale in their farms, so that his own popularity might be assured in order to serve the purposes of his Queen.

The letter from Gilbert is addressed to “My Lord, my Father” :—

“My duty most humbly remembered, right honourable my singular good Lord and father. Your letters, sent by my lacquey of the 10th of this May, I received the 13th, at which time my Lord of Leicester was at Wanstead where he yet remains, and therefore I presently delivered your Lordship’s to the Queens Majesty to Mr. Secretary Walsingham, to be delivered by him, the weather being wet and rainy and therefore no hope that her Majesty would walk or come abroad, so as I might deliver it myself. But whilst I stood by he read your Lordship’s letter to himself, the which he liked very well ; and said that he perceived thereby that your Lordship meant to deal well with your tenants, whereof he was very glad, for that he knew also that it would very well content her Majesty ; but very little more speech he had with me at that time, and, since, I hear that he has delivered your Lordship’s letter to her Majesty, the which she also has taken in very good part. The other letter, to my Lord Leicester, I sent forthwith to him to Wanstead, but he returns not till to-morrow, having been there all this week ; and I hear nothing from him thereof. I likewise delivered your Lordship’s letter to my Lord Treasurer, who liked it very well ; and said that he was very glad that your Lordship took his plain dealing with you in his letter in so good part. And thus this tragedy I hope is at an end, until the coming up of Higgen-

botham, with such proofs as your Lordship shall send against him.

“We have had no little ado with these unreasonable people of Ashford, whereof this bearer can inform your Lordship at length ; but now they are all returned back again, and none of those letters that were sent up to the Council, or any other concerning that matter, were delivered, but sent down to my Lady again ; yet it was thought good that I should make my Lord of Leicester privy to the coming of these persons ; the which I did the same day that they came to town ; and, when I had told him at length how the case stood, he agreed with me that it was a plain practice ;¹ yet, nevertheless wished that (if by any means possible) we should stay them from complaining ; saying, in general words, that if they were not stayed, there would fall out greater inconvenience both to your Lordship and my Lady than you were aware of, how false and untrue soever their complaints were. But, before that, he enquired of the town where they dwelt, which when I had described to him, he well remembered, and that he had angled and fished at the end of that town ; and said that he thought it belonged wholly to my Lady ; and asked whether your Lordship did meddle therewith or not. I answered him that your Lordship had wholly left it to my Lady, to use at her pleasure, and was not privy that her Ladyship dealt therewith. ‘Well,’ quoth he, ‘but for all that assure yourself that whosoever set these varlets and the others on, had no less evil meaning towards my Lord than my Lady ; for there is no difference made, neither in the Queen’s opinion nor any others but whatsoever concerns one of them, touches

¹ That is, clearly a plot against Shrewsbury.

them both alike ; and yet,’ quoth he, ‘I never heard of any practice for the removing of my Lordship’s charge, but, amongst other things, this was ever one : that there was no good agreement betwixt my Lord and my Lady : and that it was informed, both to the Queen and others, that there was a secret division between your doings, and,’ quoth he, ‘if it were known I verily believe the same has now been informed, and it is not long since I heard it, when I am assured that there never was any such thing ; but,’ quoth he, ‘by the Eternal God, if they could ever bring the Queen to believe it that there were jars betwixt them, she would be in such a fear as it would sooner be the cause of the removing of my Lordship’s charge than any other thing ; for I think verily,’ quoth he, ‘she could never sleep quietly after, as long as that Queen remained with them’ ; and, next to this it troubles the Queen most when she hears that you are not so well beloved of your tenants as she would wish, which was the cause of her late earnest letter, ‘the which,’ quoth he, ‘I could not stay if my life had lain thereon. Well,’ quoth he, ‘I am glad all these former matters are so well satisfied ; and, to conclude,’ quoth he, ‘I pray God that my Lord and Lady have none but faithful and true servants about them, and that none of them do, by indirect means, cause it to be informed sometimes hither that there are mislikes or disagreements betwixt them when there are none at all.’ I leave to write unto your Lordship my answers to many of these his Lordship’s speeches, for they would be too long ; and your Lordship may think that either I answered according to my duty, and to the truth, or else I forgot myself overmuch. All this speech I had with him before he went

to Wanstead, which is five days since. The secret opinion is now that the matter of Monseigneur's¹ coming and especially the marriage, is grown very cold, and Simier like shortly to go over; and yet I know a man may take a thousand pounds in this town, to be bound to pay double so much when Monseigneur comes into England and treble so much when he marries the Queen's Majesty, and if he neither do the one nor the other, to gain the thousand pound clear. This is all the news that I hear. And thus, my wife and I, most humbly beseeching your Lordship's daily blessings, with our wonted prayer, upon our knees, for your long continuance in all honour, most perfect health, and long long life, I cease.

"At your Lordship's little house near Charing Cross, this present Friday, late at night, 15th of May, 1579.

"Your Lordship's most humble and
obedient loving son,

"GILBERT TALBOT.

"I wish it would please your Lordship to remember my Lord Chancellor with some gift. It would be very well bestowed."

Thus, because of the possibility of larger treasons, the warder of Mary of Scotland and his family must needs swallow their private grievances, forgive their truculent tenants, and appear wreathed with smiles. They must maintain their estate, in spite of their increasing liabilities and the churlishness of the Royal

¹ The Duke of Anjou, Elizabeth's new suitor, whom she called her "Frogg," while his ambassador, Simier, who so nearly, in his own opinion, secured for his master the bride of his ambitions, was known at Court as the "Monkey."

Exchequer, and above all they must keep my Lord Treasurer well supplied with *douceurs*.

Why they did not sell a portion of their vast inheritance at this juncture in order to make matters comfortable one cannot understand. In London the Earl's creditors were pressing him, and he was too conscientious to let the matter stand longer than avoidable.

A new responsibility was about to be thrust on the Talbots in securing the hereditary rights of their grandchild Arabella. For the Dowager Lady Lennox died in this year quite suddenly at her house at Hackney. It was odd that the guest who last saw her was the man whom she had accused of slaying his wife, and whose treachery she had once denounced. Lord Leicester went down to talk business with her at Hackney, relating, no doubt, to the sorry state of her financial affairs, and stayed to dine with her. Just after he left she was taken violently ill, and died two days later. What she had to bequeath—and Heaven knows it was little enough—in the way of jewels she left to Arabella Stuart. With the death of her son, Lennox, the ties which bound her to life practically disappeared, and she succumbed at the age of sixty-seven to a disease which must have been aggravated by the terrible misfortunes of her extraordinary life. Her own dowry of Scottish lands made her no return because of the war-bound condition of her native country; the sons who owned the estates conferred on her husband by Henry VIII were all dead. Her land in Yorkshire passed from her with the death, one presumes, of her last son, and her fatherless granddaughter was, as Strickland

says, "heiress to nought but sorrow and a royal pedigree."

It was evident that a push must be made to protect the rights of the child. Queen Mary herself sent for the old lady's jewels on behalf of her little niece, but on the other hand she urged her son's guardians to put forward his claims. This was not with a view to destroying the chances of Arabella, but merely to assert his family rights, lest he should be regarded as a foreigner. A counterblast to this was the action of Elizabeth, who took the child under her protection. This fulfilled the heart's desire of Elizabeth Shrewsbury. Yet it did not avail her much. The right to do as he chose with the earldom was by young James, under the influence of his nobles, claimed for Scotland, and he was made to grant the earldom to the Bishop of Caithness, a man advanced in years and without heir, chosen purposely for present convenience until another Stuart—Esmé Stuart, Lord d'Aubigny, should claim it. Lord and Lady Shrewsbury wrote in deprecation to Lord Leicester on the subject, entreating Elizabeth's intervention :¹ "Unless the Queen will write in most earnest sort to the King of Scotland on her little ward's behalf . . . we cannot but be in some despair. . . . The Bishop of Caithness . . . is an old sickly man without a child ; and I think it is done that D'Aubigny, being in France and the next heir male, should succeed him. My wife says that the old Lord Lennox told her long ago of D'Aubigny's seeking to prevent the infant."

Subsequently Mary declined to open any negotiations with Esmé Stuart in her own affairs, both because she

¹ Leader.

did not trust him and because she was desirous not to give offence to “our right well-beloved cousin, Elizabeth, Countess of Shrewsbury.” This is proof enough that her first move in regard to the matter had been one of pure policy and was to be regarded as quite apart from her private sentiments. It were well if she had never sent the recommendation.

Other rumours of the moment gathered special force, and were perhaps of more importance to the nation at large than was the possible escape of Mary. They were rumours of the Queen’s marriage. Anjou’s wooing was a long business. It lasted over nine years. Elizabeth was just now revelling in rather a skittish mood in spite of the wild “bruits” about her health. It was said that she was threatened with epilepsy; at all events she could enjoy herself, and receive fantastic love letters, while she shortened the leash by which she held Mary, and docked her of any semblance of liberty. It did not seem to depress the Virgin Queen that her royal suitor was only twenty. She always pretended great coyness towards all gentlemen, and there is an odd touch in the way she scolded Gilbert Talbot for inadvertently gazing upon her in her early morning deshabelle as she stood at a casement.

“On May Day I saw her Majesty, and it pleased her to speak to me very graciously. In the morning about eight o’clock I happened to walk in the Tiltyard, under the gallery where her Majesty used to stand to see the running at tilt; where by chance she was, and looking out of the window, my eye was full towards her, she showed to be greatly ashamed thereof, for that she was unready, and in her night stuff; so when she saw me

after dinner, as she went to walk, she gave me a great fillip on the forehead, and told my Lord Chamberlain, who was the next to her, how I had seen her that morning, and how much ashamed she was. And, after, I presented unto her the remembrance of your Lordship's and my Ladyship's bounden duty and service; and said that you both thought yourselves most bounden to her for her most gracious dealing towards your daughter my Lady of Lennox; and that you assuredly trusted in the continuance of her favourable goodness to her and her daughter. And she answered that she always found you more thankful than she gave cause. . . ."

That last sentence rings with ironical truth. As they read it Earl and Countess might well merge their differences and smile unanimously—a somewhat bitter smile!

CHAPTER XV

RUTH AND JOYUSITIE

THE dashing suitor of Mary of Scotland, Don John of Austria, was dead. Her rival was on the edge of a marriage with a son of Mary's stoutest champion—France. It was a bad moment for the prisoner. It was not a pleasant time for the Talbots. Life at Sheffield could be varied only by letters from Gilbert, though his parents must to some extent have been cheered by the prospect of his speedily having another heir. His wife was attended by no less a person than the famous physician of my Lord of Leicester, a certain Mr. Julio, who seems, on all accounts, to have known a great deal too much about the unholy drugs which the Medici found so useful, though his skill as a physician could not be gainsaid. Gilbert Talbot at least seems flourishing. He is free to come and go; he is quite a "citizen of the world." He executes commissions for his family, his purchases are practical, and he is thoughtful for his stepmother's needs. "There are two Friesland horses," he writes, "of a reasonable price for their goodness; I have promised the fellow for them £33; I think them especial good for my Ladyship's coach; I will send them down." He despatches constant reports of his wife's health, and of the repairs and decorations which he is superintending in "Shrewsbury House," otherwise the Earl's house in "Broad Street" from

which Gilbert writes. A special ceiling was being designed for this, the building was to be newly glazed, and the family coat-of-arms inserted in the windows in stained glass. In a postscript he heralds a private letter from the Queen to Lady Shrewsbury, which is not forthcoming. "My Lord, my brother¹ tarrieth only for her Majesty's letter to my Lady, which, she saith, she will write in her own hand, so as nobody shall be acquainted with a word therein till my Lady receive it. I have not seen her look better a great while, neither better disposed ; the living God continue it."

The composition of this young gentleman is always rather vague and his punctuation hazy. He means, of course, that it is the Queen who is in such good health and humour. She was very busy puzzling everyone over her projected marriage, and sketching Court entertainments in connection with it. Even while she felt the gravity of such a step she would dally with it, thrust away apparently all but the lighter side of things. She kept her Privy Council sitting "from eight o'clock in the morning until dinner-time ; and presently after dinner, and an hour's conference with her Majesty's Council again, and so till supper-time." All this strain was induced, Gilbert assures the household at Sheffield, by "the matter of Monsigneur coming here, his entertainment here, and what demands are to be made unto him in the treaty of marriage . . . ; and I can assure your Lordship it is verily thought this marriage will come to pass of a great sort of wise men ; yet nevertheless there are divers others like Sr. Thomas of Jude who would not believe till he had both seen and felt.

¹ Evidently his elder brother Francis Talbot, who was probably about to visit his parents.

It is said that Monseigneur will certainly be here in May next. . . . It is said that he will be accompanied with three dukes, ten earls, and a hundred other gentlemen."

The suitor came—but more or less secretly—and departed. It was not till nearly a year later that the cat-and-mouse game which Elizabeth played with him approached a crisis in the shape of a splendid pageant at Whitehall, which she organised to dazzle the French Ambassador, and to give the impression that this affair was really to be accomplished. Gay times those—with Sir Philip Sidney's art and grace to lead the pomps and ceremonies! Everyone of importance was invited. "Her talk,"¹ says a contemporary of Elizabeth, "was of tournaments and balls; her one desire was that the fairest ladies in England should grace her Court. The Lords were bidden to bring their families to London that there might be the bustle of constant gaiety. The merchants were ordered to sell their silks, velvets, and cloth of gold at a reduction of a quarter of the ordinary price that more should be induced to buy, and so enhance the general splendour."

Alack for the Shrewsburys! No gay invitation appears to have summoned them from the wilds of their county to witness the famous pageant and the battle of flowers and perfumes waged this year in the tiltyard at Whitehall, or applaud the splendid chariot of "my Lady Desire" and her four gallant sons, of whom Sir Philip Sidney personated one.

Such happiness and all that which Mary of Scotland, in a letter, termed "joyusitie" was a thing apart from existence at Sheffield, and she, who loved all such

¹ Quoted in Creighton's *Elizabeth*.

fantastical gaieties, who knew as much as any of them of love practices and flowery games, who could play even with peasant folk like a child, looked wistfully forth upon the world from the leads of her castle-prison or from the meadows close to the Lodge, its neighbour. From 1579 to 1581 her affairs and those of the Talbots are full of small events, things which kept them alert, yet brought but little result. The Earl was watched closely by Elizabeth. He could not even leave home for two days without sharp reprimand, although he never absented himself for an hour without knowing that his prisoner was absolutely secure, while his servants kept him carefully informed of her condition. One of them, for example, by name George Skargelle, a constant eye-witness of the Shrewsbury tragi-comedy, not only reports upon the prisoner, but scours the immediate neighbourhood to see what is going on: "May yt plese your honner to understand that your L' house is quyet and well, God be pressed; and the Quene is sarvet wth. her vetteles and wille plesed for thes II dayes." He goes to the Castle gardens "to see what stir there was of your Lordship's follkes" and found certain fellows playing at dice, while in the town of Sheffield he discovered other gamblers at cards. After this he breaks a lance in speech with his master's truculent "bad tenants of Glossopdale," whom he so mistrusted that he gave information of their presence to the men at the bridges and the watches, and to the owners of the houses where the travellers lodged. The Queen heard of the Earl's absence (for there were always people ready to report the least movement of so notable a county resident), and belaboured him in a letter. He begged her to allow him to come to Court

and justify himself. For many reasons he longed to do this. He was weary of writing endless letters to her and to the Treasury. His personal debts weighed on his conscience, and his enemies were always trying to make out that he could not be in any need of supplies because of his large estates. Big houses are big thieves, and what with his large double family and the costs entailed by his position, even his trade projects—he was among other things an owner of lead and exporter of it—did not keep him in sufficient ready money to maintain all his houses and fulfil his landlord's liabilities as he would have wished. He was not personally an extravagant man, and displays none of the magnificent tastes of his wife in regard to his house and person. He declared that his creditors should be satisfied rather than he should use expensive household articles. "I would have you buy me glasses to drink in," he wrote in 1580 to his servant Baldwin. "Send me word what old plate yields the ounce, for I will not leave me a cup to drink in, but I will see the next term my creditors paid." He may have made a special point of this in order that Baldwin should use the statement as a pathetic plea when making application to the Treasury for payments due to his master, the main reason the Earl had for keeping his representative in London. He had felt deeply the false reports of his income spread about by local detractors, who were probably also responsible for the statement that he was now keeping his prisoner on short commons. His sensations and those of the Countess on hearing of this from Lord Leicester can well be imagined. The statement had been handed on to him by the French Ambassador in London, and Leicester told him it would "much mislike her Majesty."

The accusation runs : "That your Lordship doth of late keep the Scotch Queen very barely of her diet, insomuch as on Easter day last she had both so few dishes and so bad meat in them as it was too bad to see it ; and that she finding fault thereat your Lordship should answer that you were cut off your allowance, and therefore could yield her no better."

And yet Shrewsbury could forgive the Queen's suspicions and, tolerably happy in the birth of a granddaughter, despite the fact that a male heir to Gilbert would have rejoiced him far more, instructed his son Francis to present for him a New Year's present to Elizabeth.

Simultaneously no time was lost, no trouble grudged in worrying Burghley, "her Majesty's housewife" as the Earl rather ironically terms him in one letter, with regard to a settlement of the everlasting claim for "this Queen's diet." Indeed, one can only imagine that this word "diet," by which the cost of the board of the Scottish Mary is always signified in succeeding correspondence, must have held in the Earl's mind and heart the same place as the name of Calais in the mind of Mary of England. Robert Beale, a clerk of the Privy Council and personal friend of the Shrewsburys, did his best for them, but despite his kindly despatches—one of which has a pretty allusion to "my little Lady Favour," evidently Lady Arabella Stuart—payment was tardy. Even the scanty allowance originally decided upon had been deliberately reduced by royal order. For the hundredth time he tackled anew the official "housewife" with the words : "I have made suit to her Highness for some recompense, in which I do find so cold comfort that I am near driven to despair to obtain anything."

Elsewhere he speaks pathetically of "the cark and care" which is his portion. "My riches they talk of are in other men's purses," he complains bitterly; "God knows I make many shifts to keep me out of debt and to help my children, which are heavy burdens though comfortable, so long as they do well. I can say no more, but I have spies near about me and know them well."

At last, in the August of 1582, in sheer despair of obtaining satisfaction, and sick of employing intermediaries, he wrote to the Queen :—

"May it please your most excellent Majesty,

"Having then ten years been secluded from your most gracious sight and happy presence, which more grieveth me than any travel or discommodity that I have suffered in this charge that it hath pleased your Majesty to put me in trust withal, I have taken the boldness most humbly to beseech your Majesty that it may please the same to license me for a fortnight's journey towards your Majesty's royal person; to the end you may by myself receive a true account of my said charge, and thereby know what my deservings are. Wherein, if I may (as I desire most earnestly) satisfy your Majesty, it shall be unto me a great encouragement to continue the most faithful duty and careful service that I owe unto your Majesty, and shall yield to my life's end."

This permission was in a fair way to be granted as far as letters could show, and the good, timid, dogged Earl made all arrangements, settled the stages of his journey, ordered bedding and lodging, and planned his retinue: "I think my company will be twenty gentlemen and twenty yeomen, besides their men and my

horsekeepers." He only waited for his journey till Chesterfield Fair was over and the crowds of suspicious loafers dispersed. But he waited far too long. The plague had seized London and had increased apace ; he dreaded the cold journey south in the autumn storms ; he dreaded an aggravated attack from "the enemy"—gout.

Simultaneously with this disappointment came sharper sorrow—the death of Francis Talbot. The event presented itself to Lord Leicester as worthy of one of those flowery, humbugging, sententious, idiotic letters of which he wrote so many in his crowded life. This unscrupulous idler, living on the fat of the land and overheaped with gifts and favours, presents a very odd picture as he conjures an afflicted, upright, and overburdened contemporary to count up his blessings : "The Lord hath blessed you many ways in this world, and not least with the blessing of children for your posterity." This from a fellow who could disown his legitimate son by denying a lawful marriage with the mother ! And again : "He that hath sent you many might have given you fewer, and He that took away this might also take away the rest. Be thankful to Him for all His doings, my good Lord, and take all in that good part which you ought ; be you wholly His, and seek His kingdom, for it far surpasses all worldly kingdoms." This from the shrewd sycophant who was waiting day after day to be announced as consort of the Queen of England !

To return on our paces a little. The health of Queen Mary was extremely unsatisfactory. From 1579 right on through the eighties she addressed letter after letter of piteous entreaties for freedom to Elizabeth,

and to the ambassador Mauvissière. Sometimes, for weeks at a time, she could not leave her bed owing to the pain in her side. Sometimes the hardly won permission to go to Buxton would revive her spirits. On one occasion she fell backwards from her horse just as she was mounting, and injured herself severely. Sometimes she was kept closely guarded at Buxton, and on others she would be allowed to see something of the country close to it. In 1577 she was so ailing that she made her will. But she would revive to write endless spirited letters, to plead incessantly and indignantly against the way in which her French dowry, the only income she now had, was being dissipated and misappropriated in France, and to make eager preparations for hunting expeditions, to few of which, as she confessed, she expected Lord Shrewsbury would give his consent. At the end of 1581 she was so worn out by secret suspense in regard to her fate, by constraint, and by lack of air and exercise—the simple remedies which in years past had helped her to conquer all bodily ills—that for once her courage left her. She begged for special doctors other than those who ordinarily attended her. She worked herself into an agony over the position of her son, and finally begged that the Queen would send assistance to her “as that she might not be cast away for want of such help of physicians and things as she needed.”

Robert Beale, already mentioned in his connection with the Privy Council, who was really sent down at this juncture to Sheffield to investigate the political relationship between Mary and her son, found the household in a depressing condition. Lord Shrewsbury had a bad attack of gout, and though the Countess was

not described as ill, her frame of mind cannot have been very cheerful. Everyone seems to have poured out his woes in Beale's ears, while he stuck to his purpose, and tried to secure a definite answer as to whether or no Mary would formally yield the Scottish crown to her son. A clear answer from her he never had. She was ill, hysterical, and, to his thinking and that of the Earl, full of trickery. They believed that she asked for a special physician from London because it might give her a chance of carrying out some scheme to her advantage in connection with the Duke of Alençon, who was expected in England. One night when she sent specially for Beale he arrived to find the room in sudden darkness, and Mary in bed, with the dim shadowy figures of her chamberwomen hovering about her. Among those shadowy ladies in the bed-chamber was still the devoted Mary Seton, to whom had come some years previously ruth which her mistress also shared. Not only had the loyal prægustator, John Beton, died in the earlier days of the long imprisonment, but his brother and successor in the post, Andrew, had passed away. With Andrew, who courted her passionately, the Seton had at last fallen in love. The only barrier to their union was a most inexplicable vow of celibacy which the girl had taken. With the approval of his brother, Archbishop Beton, and the encouragement of his royal mistress, the gallant Andrew overcame his lady's dread of the married estate, and undertook to secure papal dispensation from her vow. It was on his journey back from Rome to Sheffield that he died.

Beale, as aforesaid, found himself nonplussed by the gloom of the Queen's apartments ; and as for talking

business it was impossible, for she received him with sobs.

Because of "her weeping and her women in the dark I brake off," he wrote to Walsingham, He went away and reported this uncanny interview to the Earl, who sent his lady to her. Mary was asleep or shamming, and all Lady Shrewsbury could do was to chat vaguely with Mary Seton about "the suddenness of her sickness." Later on the same careful enquiries were made by the Countess, whose shrewd deduction was, "I have known her worse and recover again." Her Ladyship was, if not head nurse on these occasions, certainly official inspectress, and Beale reported that whether Mary was dangerously ill or not she was obliged to use medicine and poultices, at which he had himself sniffed inquisitively, and which Lady Shrewsbury had seen applied.

Presently there was a decided improvement in the condition of the invalid, and Elizabeth allowed Mary's carriage to be sent to her so that she might drive within the limits of the Sheffield manor estate, whose circumference in those days, as Leader assures us, was eight miles, and covered an expanse of 2461 acres. Mary could not yet avail herself of this distraction, so sore and feeble was her weakened body. Yet at all times and seasons she was extraordinarily sensitive to the joys and sorrows of persons in her environment. The birth of Gilbert's daughter already mentioned was just such an occasion for her goodness and generosity. She stood godmother to the child and sent to France for presents. These family occurrences complicated the Earl's business considerably, and he took great precautions on this occasion that the event should not come to

pass under the same roof as that which held his captive. At the end of the letter, in which he instructs Baldwin to make certain payments to his daughter-in-law's nurse, he says : "I am removed to the castle, and most quiet when I have the fewest women here, and am best able to discharge the trust reposed in me."

He had still further occasion for this attitude, for another blow fell upon his family. Young Lady Lennox died. As usual it was the Earl who made the formal announcement of the loss at Court, for his wife was, as on a previous occasion, too distraught to collect her wits.

"My very good Lords,

"It hath pleased God to call to His mercy out of this transitory world my daughter Lennox, this present Sunday, being the 21st of January, about three of the clock in the morning. Both towards God and the world she made a most godly and good end, and was in most perfect memory all the time of her sickness even to the last hour. Sundry times did she make her most earnest and humble prayer to the Almighty for her Majesty's most happy estate and the long and prosperous continuance thereof, and as one most infinitely bound to her Highness, humbly and lowly beseeched Her Majesty to have pity upon her poor orphan Arabella Stewart, and as at all times heretofore both the mother and poor daughter were most infinitely bound to her Highness, so her assured trust was that Her Majesty would continue the same accustomed goodness and bounty to the poor child she left, and of this her suit and humble petition my said daughter Lennox, by her last will and testament,

requireth both your Lordships, to whom she found and acknowledged herself always most bound in her name, most lowly to make this humble petition to Her Majesty and to present with all humility unto Her Majesty a poor remembrance (delivered by my daughter's own hands) which very shortly will be sent, with my daughter's most humble prayer for her Highness' most happy estate, and most lowly beseeching her Highness in such sort to accept thereof as it pleased the Almighty to receive the poor widow's mite.

"My wife taketh my daughter Lennox's death so grievously that she neither doth nor can think of anything but of lamenting and weeping. I thought it my part to signify to both your Lordships in what sort God hath called her to his mercy, which I beseech you make known to Her Majesty and thus with my very hearty commendations to both your good Lordships I cease.

"Sheffield Manor this 21st January, 1581-2.

"Your Lordships' assured

"G. SHREWSBURY.

"To Lord Burghley and Lord Leicester."¹

¹ Ellis's *Letters* (Lansdowne MSS.).

CHAPTER XVI

VOLTE FACE

THE death of her daughter Elizabeth Lennox proved a heavy blow to Bess Shrewsbury. At first she did not realise the full force of it. Everything possible had been done to secure puissant support and interest for Elizabeth and her child Arabella immediately on the death of her husband and mother-in-law.

The will executed by Queen Mary in 1577 specially named Arabella Stuart as heiress to her father's earldom, in the clause : "Je faitz don à Arbelle, ma niepce, du compté de Lennox, tenu par feu son père, et commande a mon filz comme mon heritier et successeur, d'obeyr en cest endroict à ma volonté."

Further, the young widow herself had found courage to address Lord Burghley :—

"I can but yield unto your Lordship most hearty thanks for your continual goodness towards me and my little one, and specially for your Lordship's late good dealing with the Scots Ambassador for my poor child's right, for which, as also sundry otherwise we are for ever bound to your Lordship whom I beseech still to further that cause as to your Lordship may seem best.

"I can assure your Lordship that the Earldom of Lennox was granted by Act of Parliament to my Lord my late husband and the heirs of his body, so that they

should offer great wrong in seeking to take it from Arbella, which I trust by your Lordships' good means will be prevented, being of your mere goodness for justice sake so well disposed thereto. For all which your Lordship's goodness as I am bound I rest in heart more thankful than I can anyway express.

"I take my leave of your Lordship, whom I pray God long to preserve.

"At Newgate Street the 15th Aug. 1578.

"Your Lordship's,

"As I am bound,

"E. LENNOX."¹

Again, immediately on the death of the old Lady Lennox Mary had executed this warrant dated Sept. 19, 1579, appointing any heirloom jewels to Arabella :—

"To all people be it knowne that we Marie be the grace of God Quene of Scotland, dowagier of Fraunce doo will and require Thomas Fowler soole executor to our dearest mother in lawe and aunt, the lady Margaret countess of Lennox deceased, to deliver into the hands and cowstody of our right well beloved cousines Elizabeth contess of Shrewsbury all and every such juells, as the sayd Lady Margaret before her death delivered and committed in charge to the said Thomas Fowler for the use of the lady Arbella Stewart her graund chyld if God send her lyf till fowrten yeres of age ; if not then, for the use of our deare and only sonne the prince of Scotland. In witness that this is owre will and desire to the sayd Fowler we have gewen the present under our owne hand at Shefeld Manor, the XIX off

¹ Ellis's *Letters*.

September the year of our lord M.D. threscore and nyntenth, and of our regne the thretty sixth.”¹

In addition Mary wrote at this time to “Monsieur de Glasgo” one of her Archbishops, in such a manner as shows her sincere attitude towards the Lennox succession. This letter embodies the important fact of the interposition of Queen Elizabeth, while the warrant just quoted awards the care of the jewels not to the mother but the maternal grandmother of the Stuart heiress.

“The Countess of Lennox, my mother-in-law died about a month ago, and the Q. of E^d. has taken into her care her ladyship’s grand daughter (Arabella S.). I desire those who are about my son to make instances in his name for this succession, not for any desire I have that he should actually succeed to it, but rather to testify that neither he nor I ought to be reputed or treated as foreigners in England who are both born within the same isle.

“This good lady was, thank God, in very good correspondence with me these 5 or 6 years bygone, and has confessed to me by sundry letters under her hand, which I carefully preserve, the injury she did me by the unjust pursuits wh. she allowed to go against me in her name, thro’ bad information, but principally, she said thro’ the express orders of the Q. of Ed. and the persuasions of her council, who took much solicitude that we might never come to good understanding together. But as soon as she came to know of my innocence, she desisted from any further suit against me.”²

¹ Labanoff.

² *Ibid.*

Lady Shrewsbury may or may not have felt the support of Mary ineffectual, but she must have hoped everything from Elizabeth, and to Lord Burghley's condolences wrote thus :—

“My honourable good Lord, your Lordship hath heard by my Lo. how it hath pleased God to visit me ; but in what sort soever his pleasure is to lay his heavy hand on us we must take it thankfully. It is good reason his holy will should be obeyed. My honourable good Lord I shall not need here to make long recital to your Lo. how that in all my greatest matters I have been singularly bound to your Lo. for your Lo.’ good and especial favour to me, and how much your Lo. did bind me, the poor woman that is gone, and my Arbella, at our last meeting at Court, neither the mother during her life, nor can I ever forget, but most thankfully acknowledge it ; and so I am well assured will the young babe when her riper years will suffer her to know her best friends. And now my good Lo. I hope her Majesty upon my most humble suit will let that portion which her Majesty bestowed on my daughter and jewel Arbella, remain wholly to the child for her better education. Her servants that are to look to her, her masters that are to train her up in all good learning and virtue, will require no small charges ; wherefore my earnest request to your Lo. is so to recommend this my humble suit to her Majesty as it may soonest and easiest take effect ; and I beseech your Lo. to give my son William Cavendish leave to attend on your Lo. about this matter. And so referring myself, my sweet jewel Arbella, and the whole matter to your honourable and friendly consideration, I take my leave

of your Lo. to pardon me for that I am not able to write to your Lo. with my own hand. Sheffield this 28th January.

“Your L. most assured
loving friend
“E. SHREWSBURY.”¹

Meanwhile the young King of Scotland took his own way, and Esmé Stuart stepped eventually into the shoes of the newly appointed Lord Lennox—the old Bishop of Caithness aforesaid—as intended by the nobles who surrounded the Scottish throne.

There was from the standpoint of King James sufficient excuse for this device. Esmé was the nephew of the late Lord Lennox, Arabella's grandfather, and a close kinsman of the young King. He had courtly training, culture, and diplomacy in his favour. He was nine years older than the little sovereign, and he came to Scotland from France as the accredited though secret representative of Rome and the Guises, to win Scotland at one stroke back to its alliance with France and its obedience to the Pope. He made his presence felt quickly enough and the first-fruits of his coming was the seizure and execution of Lord Morton—erstwhile Regent, and creature of Elizabeth—as a prominent agent in the murder of Lord Darnley. Here for the moment we leave Esmé Stuart, in Creighton's concentrated phrase, as “master of Scotland . . . the English party practically destroyed.”

Meanwhile, all the Countess of Shrewsbury could do was to write abject letters to Elizabeth asking her to execute an order by which a settled allowance should be conferred on Arabella.

¹ Ellis's *Letters*.

The Countess could obviously now have nourished no hopes of utilising Mary's influence. The Earl was in receipt of all outside information in regard to Scotland and the English Court. It was patent that no help for Mary could come from James, well primed since his cradle by the lords who hated his mother. Bess Shrewsbury's glorious dream of a throne for Arabella stared at her now as a somewhat sickly vision. The only hopes for the child were from an influential marriage. That Arabella's grandmother did confide her dream to Mary is evident from the very curious revelations which the latter makes in subsequent letters, when the Countess, once so friendly and communicative, if at times brusque and inquisitorial, had turned against her to the extent of grave "scandilation," in the language of those days.

This business of Arabella Stuart's future marks a crisis in the Shrewsbury household. It was like the tap given to a very vivid and complex kaleidoscope, for it suddenly brought the relationship of the three important personages—Earl, Countess, and Scottish Queen—into new juxtaposition, and the true colour of the desires of the Countess shone out more vividly for the changed order of things. To the mere onlooker the matter is not made clear till much later. Only those immediately concerned were aware of her gradual change of front, especially towards her husband, and it was not yet that the full result of this apparent volte face could be perceived. In order to understand how marked was this change events must be anticipated by a year or two, and attention given to an extraordinary letter from Queen Mary which betrays all sorts of unauthorised intercourse between herself and Lady Shrewsbury. This

letter, penned by an always fanciful and extremely excitable woman, is of course, an exaggeration of the Countess's opportunism. Yet, there has evidently been a gradual cessation of the friendly intimacy between the two women, and a sufficient revelation of the Countess's mind to give Mary occasion to flare out to such a correspondent as the ambassador Mauvissière. In this letter, of the year 1584, she speaks fiercely of the treachery of Lady Shrewsbury—"La fausseté de mon honorable hostesse"—which she wishes made clear to Elizabeth: "Rien n'a jamais aliéné la susdite de moy que la vaine espérance par elle conçue de faire tomber cette couronne sur la teste d'Arbella sa petite-fille, mesmement par son mariage avec le fils du comte de Leicester, divers tokens estant passez entre les enfans nourris en cette persuation, et leurs peintures envoyées d'une part et l'autre." She goes on to say that but for this imaginary hope—"une telle imagination"—of making one of her race royal the countess would never have so turned away from Mary—"ne se fult jamais divertye de moy"—for, the writer continues:¹ "she was so bound to me, and regardless of any other duty or regard, so affectionate towards me that, had I been her own queen, she could not have done more for me; and as a proof of this say to the Queen, pretending that you heard it from Mrs. Seton last summer when she went to France, that I had the sure promise of the said countess that if at any time my life were in danger, or if I were to be removed from here, she would give me the means of escape, and that she herself would easily elude danger and punishment in respect to this; that she made her son Charles Cavendish swear to me in her

¹ Labanoff. *State Papers*, Mary Queen of Scots.

presence that he would reside in London on purpose to serve me and warn me of all which passed at the Court, and that he would actually keep two good strong geldings specially to let me have speedy intelligence of the death of the Queen, who was ill at the time ; and that he thought to be able to do this. . . . There-upon the said countess and her sons used every possible persuasion to prove to me the danger to which I was exposed in the hands of the Earl of Shrewsbury, who would deliver me into the hands of my enemies or allow me to be surprised by them, in such a manner that, without the friendship of the said countess, I was in very bad case. To begin with you need only put forward these two little examples, by which the Queen can judge what has gone to make up the warp and woof¹ of the intercourse during the past years between myself and the said countess, whom, if I wished, I could place in a terrible position by giving the names of those persons who, by her express order, have brought me letters in cypher, which she has delivered to me with her own hand. It will be sufficient for you to tell the Queen that you heard these particulars from the said Mrs. Seton, and that you are positive that if it pleased her to make skilful enquiry into the misconduct of the said countess, I could disclose other features of greater importance which would cause considerable discomfort to others about her. Contrive, if possible, that she² shall keep the matter secret without ever naming who had been induced to reveal these things by devotion to her welfare, that in short she may recognise what

¹ I have translated this freely. Mary means the tissue of treachery, the fabrications of the Countess during their acquaintance.

² The Queen.

faith she can place in the said countess, who in your opinion could be won over to my cause, if I thought well, by a present of two thousand crowns.

“You have afforded me peculiar satisfaction by sending copies of my letters . . . into France and Scotland, by which the truth of these rumours may be known, rumours which I am certain only proceed from the said countess and her son Charles ; but since the witnesses by whom I can prove my case are afraid to incur the displeasure of the Queen, I am constrained to bide until I can find others to assist at a public explanation and reparation.

“Sheffield, 1584, March 21.”

This letter flies like a thunderbolt across the Shrewsbury heaven. The lady's ambition, according to her enemy, acknowledges no bounds, is no respecter of persons. Mary she not only casts aside like an old glove, but she assumes a triumphant, hostile attitude towards her. Through Lord Leicester's heir, Arabella will ensure the favour of the English throne, while other means will be used to secure the Scottish throne itself for the child. Portraits and “divers tokens” have passed between the children. Bess is as sure of her power now as she was in the days when she boasted that she could both assist Mary to escape and herself elude retribution. Robust, rich, prosperous, swelled with her dreams, she counts herself unassailable. Her mood of excitement tempts her, however, further than her caution. Mary has spoken to Mauvissière of “rumours,” reports so serious that they have reached even to Scotland and France. She is sure that the Countess and her son Charles, once her sworn servants,

are the source of these. A letter, which must be quoted in full here, written six months later to Mauvissière, makes the substance of these rumours perfectly clear.

If the correspondence already quoted come like a thunderbolt, this next letter conveys a shock even greater. There is one really extraordinary passage in the first letter which, though it concerns the Earl, does not prepare the onlooker for the scandalous matter of the second epistle. This passage is the one in which his wife has the audacity, according to Mary, to warn the latter against the Earl. What is the psychological process which forces such a statement from the shrewd, worldly-wise woman whose fortunes, socially, are entirely bound to those of her husband? What can it be but blind jealousy arising from consciousness of their opposite natures and from the hostility of sex? The intrigues with Mary, the opportunism, the blatant ambition—these are comprehensible. Was it all true? In the light of later letters from Mary all such statements must be regarded very sceptically. Division there certainly was in the great household : scolding and bitterness, a great weariness of heart, a series of sordid misunderstandings. If in a wild reckless mood the emotional, powerful spirit of Bess Shrewsbury had escaped control, and she had uttered the ghost of such a warning as that quoted, it must have sprung from nothing but the blind hatred of Mary and jealousy of her husband, the last having its source in her fierce consciousness of an utter clash of temperaments. Her opportunism, her immense ambitions are conceivable ; even, to a certain degree, the longing to intrigue with Mary. They are comprehensible if one estimates the Countess's nature as one in which the love of domina-

tion, the quick sense of advantage, and the keen perception of the melodrama of life were combined. The Earl's nature was the very opposite. To him she must have acted latterly like a goad, while his obstinacy maddened her. His dogged patience under unwilling service, his bitter and almost stupid resignation under the meanness and suspicion of his Queen, his caution and method, his intense sensitiveness to any unjust criticism, his horror of plots, his dread of any unauthorised move, be it ever so trifling, formed a granite barrier to his wife's independent, self-concentrated, restless spirit. Her pugnacity tussled with his resolution, and discord ensued.

She whom Elizabeth darkly called "The Daughter of Debate," the captive Queen—was suddenly become as much of a thorn in the side of husband and wife as in that of their sovereign. Wheresoever Mary was there stalked complexity. This of itself, given the intricacies of her Stuart nature and her extraordinary life and circumstances, was sufficient. But that the Countess should have piled complexity upon complexity in such a way as to wreck her own household reduces the observer to stupefaction. By the second letter to Mauvissière it is seen that she was at Court. The mere fact of her presence there seems to rouse Mary to a sort of fury at her own helplessness. This letter is even more detailed, more excited than the one just quoted :—

"Wingfield, October 18, 1584.

"No reply having come from the Queen of England concerning the treaty proposed between her, me, and my son, and not having received any news from you for six weeks I cannot but doubt that this delay has

been purposed to give time and advantage to the Countess of Shrewsbury, in order that she may play her game and trouble those on every side possible, to escape the just punishment of her fault and treason, and to give the lie to the Queen her sovereign, to the malicious reports, so harmful to me. I would make, with all affection possible, the request from myself, and in the name of Monsieur, my good brother, and the noblemen, my relations in France, that you will give a satisfactory and clear explanation to the Queen of England and those of her Council of the false and scandalous rumours that everybody knows have been invented and spread abroad by the Countess of my intercourse with the Count of Shrewsbury. I beg you to proceed with all haste in a public examination or at least before the Council, and in your presence particularly, of her and her two sons, Charles and William Cavendish, whether they will confirm or refute the rumours and language they have previously maintained, that in the cause of reason and justice they may be punished as an example, there being no subject so poor, vile, and abject in this kingdom to whom common justice can be denied. Such satisfaction would be granted to the meanest subject, how much more to one of my blood and rank, and so closely related to the Queen. But here I am, bound hand and foot, and, I might say, almost tongue-tied. I can do nothing for myself to avenge this atrocious and wicked calumny. May it please you to remember the definite promise made to me by the Queen, which I have mentioned before in four or five letters to you, that she had always hated the liberty and insolence, so largely encouraged in this corrupt age in the slander

of Kings and primates, and that she would do all in her power to repress this evil. I will give her the names of the guilty originators of this scandal, and in proof of her words she will be obliged to execute a rigorous and exemplary punishment upon them. I name to her now the Countess of Shrewsbury and her son Charles especially, to convict them of this unhappy slander. If not, I ask but their own servants and those of the Count usually in the house should be put on their oath to God, and their allegiance to the Queen, and examined, for I know too well that some of them otherwise would never have the chance of giving witness, and the Countess would maintain her rumours were truth. One of her servants has told me that she has caused this scandal to be spread in divers parts of the kingdom, and that they have heard her in the room of the Count reproaching him similarly. And to come to particulars, for some months at Chatsworth there was staying one of the grooms of Lord Talbot specially to enquire concerning this. He has nothing to say of me under the name of the Lady of Bath. I cannot but think the Countess has power to silence her friends, who would otherwise be too convincing witnesses of the falsehood of their rumours against the Queen, her sovereign, so that she will do wisely not to force me to rouse the witnesses, for if I demand justice on them, and am refused, I will produce, before all the princes of Christendom, by articles signed by my own hand, an account of the honourable proceedings of this lady, as much against the Queen as against me, against whom she had formerly spread this rumour. I will give a declaration of the time, persons, and all friends,

so necessary that it will not be pleasing to those who are constant in condemning. And in the wrongs that she has done them, if there are any of them to support her and to countenance those injuries which I have received from her, or if in such a case there is a question of my honour, it will always be to me more than earthly life. It may be after so long and painful captivity I am constrained and obliged to put before the public anything which may offend them or do harm. In that it is for them to remedy and obviate by giving me reparation and satisfaction for scandals and impostures. God grant that at the end I may find true what the Countess has formerly told me, that the more she could show herself my enemy, and work against me, she would be so much the more welcome and more favoured at Court.

“MARIE R.”¹

The scandalous rumours suggesting a liaison between Mary of Scotland and Shrewsbury seem to have been on foot some two years previous to this letter, and were naturally combined with the suggestion of his connivance in her plans for escape and his vilification of his Queen. There is a long, tedious, pitiful letter from the Earl on the subject under the date of October 18th, 1582, addressed, of course, to Lord Burghley. The “scandilation” is not mentioned as such, but the other allegations are strictly denied. Shrewsbury reminds his friend that on the last occasion on which he saw Elizabeth and “enjoyed the comfort of her private speech” she did “most graciously promise that she would never condemn” him without calling for his self-

¹ Labanoff. This translation is the one given by Leader.

justification. He begs for a hearing now. He adds :
“ Among the rest of my false accusations, your Honour knoweth that I have been touched with some undutiful respects touching the Queen of Scots ; but I am very well able to prove that she hath shewed herself an enemy unto me, and to my fortune ; and that I trust will sufficiently clear me.” The letter is dated from Handsworth, the little manor which appears to have been the only place in this and after years in which the harassed man could possess his soul in quiet and dignity.

CHAPTER XVII

THE COIL THICKENS

THAT last plaint of George Talbot was in 1582. Previous to this the curious letters quoted from Gilbert Talbot give a pretty graphic notion of the acute irritation between his parents. They still sometimes acted in concert. In 1583 (February 7th) both of them wrote simultaneously to Burghley to desire his good offices in appeasing the Queen anent the marriage of the Countess's nephew, John Wingfield, to the Countess of Kent. By 1584 the affair seems to have developed into a very unequal family feud of five to two. As in a game of "oranges and lemons" Bess Shrewsbury, already backed by her sons Charles and William Cavendish, seems to have tugged, not only her daughter Mary over to her side, but also Mary's husband. He is no longer Gilbert the go-between, but the declared champion of his stepmother against his own father and his stepmother's eldest son Henry Cavendish. Family affairs are certainly in a shockingly ungodly condition. William Cavendish is trying to screw his stepfather over a matter of £1800, and the quarrel between the Countess and Earl is so serious that the matter has passed into the hands of the Master of the Rolls and the Lord Chief Justice, who take opposite sides. The Countess has named her husband as "traytor" at Court, and he is resolved to go and exonerate himself. His secret

malady is betrayed to Gilbert by a family servant named Steele, whose confidences can only help to complicate matters. He has long conversations with Queen Mary's secretary, Curle, and seems to have access to all her retinue and to know the attitude of every member of the Earl's household towards Gilbert. The only redeeming feature is the steadfast loyalty of Henry Cavendish—heir to a portion of the Rufford and Lange-ford estates—to his stepfather. Gilbert adroitly urges his own poverty and his wife's "necessite," but is sharply silenced. Shrewsbury is very jealous of his heir's long absence at the hated Chatsworth, but at the same time promises to defray the fees of the physician attending Mary—the redoubtable Mary Talbot.

This lady is the true outcome of her mother. Bess Shrewsbury was accustomed to speak of her many building enterprises as her "workes." One of her most pathetically characteristic "workes" was Mary Talbot. Later on in regard to Arabella Stuart's career history shows how the mother's intriguing match-making tactics repeated themselves in the daughter. For the moment it is her pertinacity, her love of possessions, her hot uncontrolled temper, and her vindictiveness which concern us.

Again we must anticipate by some years and include here as explanatory and pertinent an episode which displays the violence and bitterness of Mary Talbot's nature.

Between the Stanhopes of Nottingham and the Cavendishes there was a deadly feud in the course of which blood was shed on both sides. In the height of this strife Mary Talbot (by that time Countess of Shrewsbury) sent the following deadly message to Sir



*Photo by Richard Keene, Ltd., Derby, from the picture at Hardwick Hall
By permission of his Grace the Duke of Devonshire*

MARY CAVENDISH, COUNTESS OF SHREWSBURY

Thomas Stanhope of Shelford. It was not written, but delivered by two messengers, and the message has come down to posterity in this form, as quoted in Johnson's *Extracts from Norfolk Papers*:—

“My Lady hath commanded me to say this much to you. That though you be more wretched, vile, and miserable than any creature living; and, for your wickedness, become more ugly in shape than the vilest toad in the world; and one to whom none of reputation would vouchsafe to send any message; yet she hath thought good to send thus much to you—that she be contented you should live (and doth noways wish your death) but to this end—that all the plagues and miseries that may befall any man may light upon such a caitiff as you are; and that you should live to have all your friends forsake you; and without your great repentance, which she looketh not for, because your life hath been so bad, you will be damned perpetually in hell fire.” The chronicler goes on to say that the heralds added many other opprobrious and hateful words, which could not be remembered, because the bearer would deliver it but once, as he said he was commanded, but said if he had failed in anything, it was in speaking it more mildly and not in terms of such disdain as he was commanded.

It was this free-tongued, easily infuriated nature with which the Earl had to cope in addition to his wife's excitability and financial ambitions, his son's cry of “Give, give!” the suspicions of his Queen, the lies and slanders of his enemies, and the intrigues of his captivating captive. The wonder is that he could be even so generous, affectionate, and level-headed as the follow-

ing letter shows ; that he could forgive Gilbert, and laugh with my Lord of Rutland, who seems to have visited Shrewsbury solely to pour balm on his friend's wounds and put him in a happier frame of mind, so that at Gilbert's coming the difficulties of a business discussion about the disposal of Welbeck—at which place the Countess eventually established her son Charles Cavendish, and concerning which she appears to have had important financial transactions with her husband—was made easy. Owing to the guest's *bonhomie*, father and son are placed on a footing which enables them to discuss things composedly, and Gilbert is informed of the false reports of his father's attitude towards Mary Talbot.

Gilbert and Mary Talbot to the Countess of Shrewsbury
(1583).

“My bounden duty, duty, etc.—On Friday at night my L. sent to me to be with him the next morning early. I came to Worsop about 9 o'clock, and found the two earls together, but saw them not till dinner was on the table. After ordinary greeting at the board, my L. speaking of Welbeck, my L. of Rutland said he was sure my L. would pay for it, and ‘so,’ quoth he, ‘you promised me yesternight,’ which my L. denied ; ‘but,’ said my L., ‘your L. was exceeding earnest with me so to do’ ; whereat they were both very merry ; and he still was earnest with my L. therein, but he laughed it off. After dinner my L. called me to him in his chamber, and told me a long tale of the cause of his meeting with that Lord ; the effect in substance was to continue friendship with him ; and recited many reasons

that he had to trust him better than any nobleman ; and said that I had like cause to do so, both in respect of kindred, and that he loveth me exceeding well ; and sware by God he was never more earnestly dealt with than he had been by him since his coming, for me ; both to be good to me in present and hereafter ; and bade me take knowledge thereof and give him thanks, and that in any case I should go to Newark to him. And before had ended all that it seemed he would have said, he was called away by the other being ready to go down to horse. So when I came out I briefly gave him thanks for what my L. had told me ; and he wished he were able to do me any pleasure, desired me to come to Newark, and he would tell me more, and none living be better welcome ; and so we parted. Then I rode some part of my L. way with him. He told me that the cause he would not have me carry my wife to London was, for that he thought your La. would go up to London, and then would my wife join with you in exclaiming against him, and so make him to judge the worse of me, with much to that effect. I alleged the necessity of my wife's estate ; how ill I could live here without any provisions ; but he cut me off, saying he looked hourly for leave to go up, and after he had been there himself, I might carry her if I would, and if I did before, he could not think I loved him ; and for her health, he said physicians might be sent for, though he bare the charges ; and would not suffer me to speak a word more thereof, but bade me now do it if I would. Then he told me that Lewis being at Newark, Hercules Foliambe told him that he heard my L. had commanded me to put away my wife ; and called Lewis, and he affirmed it, and so my L. willed me to charge Foliambe

therewith and make him bring out his author. Then he told me that the matters were hard between your La. and him ; that Sir W. M. and the Master of the Rolls were wholly on your side, and would have set down an order clean against him ; but that the Lord Chief Justice would not thereto consent, but stuck to him as friendly as ever man did. He would honour and love him for it whilst he lived ; and that the order was deferred till Thursday last ; and that this last week he had found out and sent up all the pay books written by Ryc. Cooke, of all manner of conveyances whatsoever, whereby it appeared that Knifton and Cooke dealt the most treacherously with him that ever any men had done ; but recited not wherein, saying that he hath not Hardwick and the West country lands without impeachment of waste, as he would be sworn his meaning was. Further that W. Cavendish he said was not ashamed to demand £1800 for [it] and made such a matter of it, as was never heard ; whereof he spake so out of purpose, as it were in vain to write it. Then commended H. Cavendish exceedingly for maintaining his honour, which he said he should fare the better for ; and told that divers noble men had of late answered for him very stoutly, especially the Earl of Cumberland. Then told that Bentall, hearing how evil he was spoken of at London, and for that your La. had called him traitor, he desired leave to go up, either to be cleared or condemned, and that he hath written by him to my L. Treasurer and my L. of Leicester that he might be thoroughly tried, and have as he had deserved. As for his knowledge of him, he wrote he had found him the truest and most faithful servant that he ever had. He said Bentall rather chose to go up of himself than to be

sent for ; and that he had been twice examined before my L. Treasurer and my L. of Leicester, and had sped well, and so would do he hoped. These are all the special points that I can remember he spoke of. I began many times to tell him my griefs, and to open my estate, but he would not suffer me to speak, but said he loved me best of all his children, and that I had never given him cause of offence but in tarrying so long at Chatsworth ; which thing he also would not suffer me to answer, but said it was past, and he would not hear more thereof. When I was parted with my L. I met Style¹ with the stuff. The secret he told me of the estate of my L. body was that swelling which he said he thought none but himself did know, but when I told him where it was, he marvelled that I knew it. He told me that Bentall persuaded my L. that he was able to do him such service above as he never had done him, and to discover the secrets of all things, especially by his brother that serves my L. of Leicester ; but Steele said he verily thought he should be laid up in prison. He said he talked with Curle all the day before he went, and all that morning, but I could get out no particular thing of him besides his continual familiarity with all the Scots. He said there is not any about my L. but Stringer but seeketh my undoing.

“I am in hope to meet Mr. Serjante Roods at Winkfield. Herein is enclosed a note for your La. to read. The remainder of Rufford and Langford is assuredly [rested] in my brother H. Cavendish, as the other lands that are unrevocable are.

“I desire to know whether your La. thinketh that her Majesty will be offended with my going to Newark

¹ Steele.

to that Earl or not, considering what speeches she used to me of him. If it be not in that respect, I think it is very necessary I go thither, seeing that he hath used so good offices for me to my L. My L. said to one that my L. of Leicester was Bental's great friend. God prosper your La. in all things. We most humbly beseech your La. blessing to us all.

“G. TALBOTT. MARY TALBOTT.”

It is patent which way the wind blows, and how the Earl is regarded by his principal antagonists. There is open war ; his words are repeated, his moves watched, and he is simply become a fine grape to be squeezed for their advantage.

Things were brewing to a head, and in 1584 Chatsworth, the beautiful, the detested of the Earl, was literally besieged by him. It must be recalled here that his wife had already divided her own two houses amongst her two elder sons. On Henry, as eldest Cavendish she had bestowed Chatsworth ; on William, her best beloved, her own Hardwick. For Charles, her youngest, as instanced, she had other plans, namely, Welbeck. Now Henry had married the Earl's daughter, Lady Grace. The quarrel naturally concentrated itself on Chatsworth, which, through Grace, was shared by the Talbot side of the family. The Earl refused to be done out of certain rights in this property. His lady, irritated by the fact that Henry was on the Earl's side, bore down upon the house, dismantled it, and sent the greater part of the contents to Hardwick, while Charles and William Cavendish practically manned the empty building. Up rode the Earl with his gentlemen and servants to demand admittance, and was, according to



Photo by Richard Keene, Ltd., Derby

HARDWICK HALL, SHOWING ENTRANCE GATEWAY

his own statements,¹ resisted by William "with halberd in hand and pistol under his girdle." The whole position was naturally rendered more and more painful by this undignified occurrence, and all parties concerned were foolishly guilty of wanton waste of a good summer's day. Meanwhile the Countess was practically without a suitable house, since she could now share none of her husband's lordly residences. Here follows a tragic and unforgettable letter from the Earl, almost alone, as it were with his back against a wall. He writes not to Burghley this time, but to Lord Leicester. Ostensibly the letter is one of condolence. Leicester's son by Lettice Knollys died in babyhood in July of this year, at the time when the Earl and his retinue hammered at the doors of Chatsworth. It was open to Shrewsbury to requite his friend's sanctimonious epistle, previously quoted, on the death of Francis Talbot by just such another. The soldier Earl, however, is of different stuff from the courtier. His heart cannot dissemble, and the occasion becomes an excuse for bitter confidences, elicited evidently by a letter from Leicester which informs him of the blow and makes kindly allusion, possibly admonitory, to Gilbert Talbot, who himself had lost an only son and heir.

"My good Lord,

"For that I perceive your Lordship takes God's handiwork thankfully, and for the best, doubt not but God will increase you with many good children, which I wish with all my heart. And where it pleases you to put me in mind of Gilbert Talbot, as though I

¹ Vol. CCVII State Papers.

should remember his case by my own, truly, my Lord, they greatly vary. For my son, I never dissuaded him from loving his wife, though he hath said he must either forsake me, or hate his wife, this he gives out, which is false and untrue. This I think is his duty ; that, seeing I have forbad him for coming to my wicked and malicious wife, who hath set me at naught in his own hearing, that contrary to my commandment, hath both gone and sent unto her daily by his wife's persuasion, yea and hath both written and carried letters to no mean personages in my wife's behalf. These ill dealings would he have salved by indirect reports, for in my life did I never seek their separation ; for the best ways I have to content myself is to think it is his wife's wicked persuasion and her mother's together, for I think neither barrel better herring of them both. This my misliking to them both argues not that I would have my son make so hard a construction of me that I would have him hate his wife, though I do detest her mother. But to be plain, he shall either leave his indirect dealings with my wife, seeing I take her as my professed enemy, or else indeed will I do that to him I would be loth, seeing I have heretofore loved him so well ; for he is the principal means and countenance she has, as he uses the matter, which is unfit ; yet will I not be so unnatural in deeds as he reports in words, which is that I should put from him the principal things belonging to the Earldom. He hath been a costly child to me, which I think well bestowed if he come here again in time. He takes the way to spoil himself with having his wife at London ; therefore if you love him, persuade him to come down with his wife and settle himself in the

country ; for otherwise, during his abode with his wife at London, I will take the £200 I give him yearly besides alienating my good will from him, If he allege it be her Majesty's pleasure to command him to wait, let his wife come home, as more fit it is for her.

"The assurance of your Lordship's faithful friendship towards me hath, by so many years' growth, taken so deep root as it cannot now fade nor decay, neither any new friendship take my faithful goodwill away, as time and occasion shall try ; and so hoping your Lordship will be satisfied without further doubt or scruple therein, I commend your Lordship to the discretion of the Almighty."

This letter is not signed by Shrewsbury, but simply endorsed : "The copy of my letter of 8th Aug., 1584," which fixes the date.

That the dignified George Talbot should stoop to such a slang expression as "neither barrel better her-ring" in regard to his once adored and brilliant Countess shows the complete wreckage of all their joy, their high comradeship, their mutual reverence.

Into the same confessional, the ear of the astute Treasurer, Bess Shrewsbury poured out her side, writing from Hardwick on August 2nd : her husband was using her very hardly, he sought to take Chatsworth from her, he had induced her son Henry to deal most unnaturally with her, wherefore she hoped that Burghley would remonstrate, as his letters would do more with the Earl than those of any other living person, etc. etc. A little over a fortnight after, the Earl, who had already given his version of the Chatsworth affair, placed details

of the "insolent behaviour" of William Cavendish before the Privy Council. The State Papers show that the Council took prompt action here, but to their reply informing the Earl of the committal of William to prison, and expressing their opinion that it was not meet that a man of his mean quality should use himself in a contemptuous sort against one of his Lordship's station and quality, they add a clause stating that the Queen desired that "he should suffer the Cavendishes to enjoy their own lands unmolested."

To all this quarrel over possessions, which reads for all the world like a prolonged act out of a new version of the ancient drama *All-for-Money*, was added the distasteful business of the now flourishing scandal about Queen Mary and the Earl. Doubtless his wife and stepsons were ready to bite out their tongues by the time the scandal they apparently fostered of his intimacy with Mary of Scots was generally known. Though their nerves were less sensitive they could not but see that the affair was passing beyond their control and that only harm could ensue. The time was approaching when they must be publicly called to account. Meanwhile lesser persons were already being interrogated. The actual details of the slander are located in the extract from a letter in diary¹ form written by the Recorder of London, William Fletewood, to Lord Burghley:—

"Thursdaie,² the next daie after, we kept the generall sessions at Westminster Hall for Middlesex. Surelie it was

¹ This "dyarium" is reprinted by Wright, Vol. II, *Queen Elizabeth and her Times*.

² The day after Michaelmas.

very great ! We satt the whole daie and the next after also at Fynsburie. At this sessions one Cople and one Baldwen my Lord of Shrewsburie's gent. required me that they might be suffered to indict one Walmesley of Islyngton an Inn-holder for scandilation of my Lord their master. They shewed me two papers. The first was under the clerk of the council's hand of my Lord's purgation, in the which your good Lordship's speeches are specially set downn. The second paper was the examinations of divers witnesses taken by Mr. Harris ; the effect of all which was that Walmesley should tell his guests openlie at the table that the Erle of Shrowsbury had gotten the Scottish Quene with child, and that he knew where the child was christened, and it was alleged that he should further adde that my Lord should never go home agayne, with lyke wordes, etc. An indictment was then drawne by the clerk of the peace the which I thought not good to have published, or¹ that the evidence should be given openlie, and therefore I caused the jurie to go to a chamber, where I was, and heard the evidence given, amongst whom one Merideth Hammer, a doctor of divinitie and Vicar of Islyngton was a witnes, who had dealt as lewdlie towards my Lord in speeches as did the other, viz. Walmeslye. This doctor regardeth not an oathe. Surelie he is a very bad man : but in the end the indictment was indorsed Billa Vera."

Of course this true bill was satisfactory in one sense. At the same time mud sticks, and the publicity of such a case always helps to arouse wider interest in the possible rumours. Both Queen Mary and the Earl were

¹ Ere.

rampant and eager for a proper official enquiry. She even sent a message to Elizabeth on the subject when in committee with an emissary of the Queen in regard to other matters. This talk was duly noted down and is included among the Marian MSS. :—

“She thanked her Majesty for the promise to punish the authors of the slanders against her; Toplif [Topcliffe] was one, and Charles Candish another; the Countess of Shrewsbury did not bear her that goodwill which the Queen supposed, ‘who with her divers times laughed at such reports, and now did accuse her. It touched his Lordship as well as her, wherefore she trusted as a nobleman he would regard his house.’ She wished this to be signified to the Lord Treasurer, Leicester, and Walsingham, desiring their favour in this suit.”

It is interesting and piquant to find that Mary’s suspicions should alight upon that egregious Papist-baiter Topcliffe, but this pompous gentleman does not appear to have been successfully impugned in this case. Otherwise Mary eventually had her will. The Earl at last succeeded in obtaining permission to go to Court to clear himself, and to relinquish finally his heavy duty. Indeed, he was soon formally delivered from his charge, but the change of officers did not take place immediately. Some time elapsed before formalities and details were carried through, and he and his prisoner paid in July, 1584, their last visit in company to Buxton. There Mary wrote her famous Latin couplet with a diamond on a window-pane :—

Buxtona quae calidae celebraris nomine Lymphae,
Forte mihi post hac non adennda, Vale.

The permission for which the Earl longed came in August, and his successor was Sir Ralph Sadler, who has previously figured in this record. It was not an easy transfer. The poor Earl's departure was complicated by the business of transferring his prisoner to Wingfield Manor from Sheffield. There were delay and trouble, so that the cavalcade did not leave till early in September, and it was not till the 7th of that month, after fifteen years of hard service, that he was a free man.

CHAPTER XVIII

“FACE TO FACE”

A FREE man, a free agent! But at what a price was Shrewsbury free!

His honour was undermined by his own family, his fortunes impaired by his Queen's penuriousness, his prime was past, his best given in return for apparently naught. Even the gratitude of his captive—and she never seems to have been regardless of such leniency as he was permitted to show her—had it been emphatically expressed, would have been no real reward to him, for it would only have placed him under suspicion. He had but one testimonial to his credit—the fact that in the midst of Mary's dangers and terrors she felt that she was safer in his keeping “than in that of any other.” His farewell to her cannot have been anything but a strained and painful matter, with the hateful barrier of “scandilation” to mar the dignity and courtesy of it on both sides. She wished him to convey her letters to Elizabeth. He declined, and her new gaoler sent them with his official correspondence. Thus parted, after the strange intimacy of fifteen years, Mary of Scotland and George Talbot. When they met again it was as principal actors in the “tragedy of Fotheringay” in the autumn of 1586.

The Earl travelled to London with his retinue of gentlemen and grooms—a business of four to five days.

Face to face he and his sovereign stood at last and the second formal step in the scandal affair was taken.

He was “very graciously used by her Majesty,” who showed herself “very desirous to comprehend the controversies between him and the lady, his wife.” Walsingham, commenting on this, writes that he feared this reconciliation would “not be performed over easily.” Elizabeth kept her promise and set to work at once. The Lords of the Council were summoned to testify to his loyalty, uprightness, and honour, and he was called to face them and receive their magnificent and pompous declaration, “a memorable testimonial by Queen Elizabeth and the Lords of the Council as to the discharge of his duty faithfully, and trust in the custody of the Queen of Scots.” It is not necessary to quote the whole document here. The actual domestic scandal is only touched very vaguely in it thus :—

“And if in some trifles, and private matters of small moment, not appertaining to the Queen’s Majesty, his Lordship thought that his honour and reputation had been touched by the evil reports of any, he was required to think that the same was common to them and others as well as to himself in this world, howbeit, if any person could be particularly charged by his Lordship, it was reason that he should be called to answer the same ; and, therefore, his Lordship was desired to assure himself of this their Lordships’ good and honourable opinion concerning his Lordship, and so to sit down as a person that was very meet for the company, then to serve her Majesty and the realm ; and so, therewith, he took his place in Council according to his degree and office.”

Thus did their Lordships pour oil on the bruises of their battered colleague. But he needed more than words. The pain was too deep to be healed by that bland reminder of the general prevalence of false witnesses in the world. The phrase "if any person could be particularly charged . . . it was reason that he should be called to answer the same" is far more curative. Two such persons had been dealt with. But his lady was not to escape. Beale, his good friend, took a serious view of the situation. "I have dealt with the Earl," he wrote to Walsingham, "touching his son, and find him well affected towards him save that he says he is ruled by his wife, who is directed by her mother. I think his hatred for her will hardly be appeased, as he thinks the slanders and other information made to her Majesty have proceeded from her."

Both Mary and Shrewsbury were to have their full satisfaction. Mary was from the first most explicit, and, not content with her excited outpourings to the French Ambassador, herself wrote to Elizabeth at this date from Wingfield Manor after Shrewsbury and she had parted. She alludes in this letter to Elizabeth's "honourable promise." She declares that she will never desist from her demands for satisfaction until her reputation is formally cleared in regard to the Countess's slanders. It is a final challenge which Elizabeth could not in decency resist.

In December of this year Bess Shrewsbury with William and Charles were called to their account before the Lords of the Council. Full satisfaction was received—of a kind. There could be nothing very triumphant about it from Mary's point of view. There was really none of that magnificent abasement of her trio of enemies

which she painted subsequently to a correspondent in one of her letters after her removal to Chartly. This is her version :—

“The Countess of Shrewsbury (I thank God) hath been tried and found to her shame, in her attempt against me, the same woman indeed that many have had opinion that she was, and at the request of my secretary Nau, he being at the Queen of England’s Court in the month of December, ’84, the said lady upon her knees, in presence of the Queen of England and some principals of her Council, denied to her the shameful bruits by herself spread abroad against me.”¹

As a matter of fact, the accused three unanimously asserted total ignorance of the entire scandal and its possible sources alike, and their declaration made before the Privy Council was solemnly recorded, and is included in the mass of State documents, while an exact copy of it is among the Talbot papers. It is not a very interesting or savoury little document, but highly important to George Talbot and his heirs as a second certificate of merit. It covers exactly the same ground as the extract quoted from Fletewood’s “dyarium.” At its conclusion, after testifying boldly to the dignity and honour of Mary, the mother and sons offer to uphold the truth of their wholesale disclaimer against any person whomsoever, whenever the occasion should arise. Thus, though posterity is afforded that vision of their abject position “on their knees in the royal presence” as stated by Mary, the attitude, contrasted with their denial, is rather that of reverent dignity than of sheer abasement.

¹ Letter to Liggon, May 18, 1586. State MSS. Mary Queen of Scots.

Thus was the honour of the Talbots saved, but at such cost and after such a pitiful process of the public washing of family linen that it does very little real credit to the parties concerned. The poor Earl could only point to his Queen's testimonial and console himself by thinking on his family doggerel :—

The Talbot true that is,
And still hath so remaynde,
Lost never noblenesse
By princke of spot distaynde :
On such a fixed fayth
This trustie Talbot stayth.

For there is no real honour left to a house divided against itself. The quarrel of man and wife had become the property of the world. Matters must be patched up somehow with the aid of friends and Court officials. Everything, to the eye, was now put on a highly respectable basis. The bland disclaimer by the Cavendishes paved the way at any rate for a more decent family relationship.

For the fourth time in her life Bess Hardwick had faced and surmounted a great danger. As Lady St. Loe she had laid herself in some way open to back-biters, had triumphantly quashed them, and had escaped being deeply involved in the affair of Lady Catherine Grey; as Lady Shrewsbury she had braved the wrath of Elizabeth over the Lennox marriage, and now triumphed over Mary and the Earl. Upon this last occasion she emerged with a slate at least superficially clean.

Superficially. The thing extorts your admiration after the reading of Mary's detailed accusations. But there is yet one more letter which Mary planned to send hurt-

ling towards the Court. It is a bomb more deadly than any of the rest, and had it found its mark even the indomitable Lady Shrewsbury might have been annihilated—would certainly have been hopelessly discounted. It is the production known to all students of this historical period as “The Scandal Letter,” here translated with the exception of passages which are best in the original French. Again, full allowance must be made here for the overwrought condition of the writer. This letter tallies with the spirit of the letters on the same subject already seen. Moreover, it is on all sides adjudged by experts to be a genuine document in Mary’s own hand. This epistle, which in itself formed a safety-valve for the tumult of the writer’s brain, either was not despatched and was afterwards found among her papers, or may have been intercepted in full flight—possibly by Burghley, for it rests to this day among the Hatfield MSS. Events show that it can never have reached Elizabeth. The publication of such pernicious matter could not have done any good or have diverted in any way Elizabeth’s disapproval from her prisoner. Nor could it have altered Mary’s fate. If there be, as one cannot but think, a certain basis of truth in it—the Countess had a lively tongue, as the world knows—the road by which this lady travelled between 1578 and 1584 must have literally overhung a ghastly social precipice.

“Madame,¹

“In accordance with what I promised you and have ever since desired, I must—though with regret that such matters should be called in question, still

¹ Labanoff.

without passion and from motives of true sincerity, as I call God to witness—declare to you that what the Countess of Shrewsbury has said of you to me is as nearly as possible as follows. I assure you I treated the greater part of her statements, while rebuking the said lady for thinking and speaking so licentiously of you, as matters in which I had no belief, either then or now, knowing the nature of the Countess and the spirit which animated her against you.

“Premièrement, qu-un, auquel elle disoit que vous aviez faict promesse de mariage devant une dame de votre chambre, avait couché infinies foys avvesques vous, avecque toute la licence et privaulté qui se peut user entre mari et femme ; mais qu’indubitablement vous n’estiez pas comme les aultres femmes, et pour ce respect c’estoit follie a tous ceulz qu-affectoient vostre mariage avec M. le duc d’Anjou, d’aautant qu’il ne se pourrait accomplir, et que vous ne voudriez jamais perdre la liberté de vous fayre fayre l’amour et avoir vostre plésir tousjours avecques nouveaulx amoureux, regrettant, ce disoit elle, que vous ne vous contentiez de maister Haton et un aultre de ce royaulme : mays que, pour l’honneur du pays, il lui fashoit le plus que vous aviez non seulement engagé vostre honneur avecques un étranger nommé Simier, l’alant trouver la nuit dans la chambre d’une dame, que la dicte comtesse blamoit fort a ceste occasion là, où vous le baisiez et usiez avec lui de diverses privautez deshonestes ; mays aussi lui revelliez les segrets du royaulme, trahisant vos propres conseillers avec luy. Que vous vous esties desportée de la mesme dissolution avec le Duc son maystre, qui vous avoit esté trouver une nuit à la porte de vostre chambre, où vous l’aviez

rencontré avec vostre seulle chemise et manteau de nuit, et que par après vous l'aviez laissé entrer, et qu'il demeura avecques vous près de troys heures.

“As for the aforementioned Hatton [it was said] that you literally pursued him, displaying your love for him so publicly that he was obliged to withdraw, that you gave Killigrew¹ a box on the ear because he did not bring back Hatton when sent in pursuit, the latter having left your presence in anger because of insulting remarks you had made about some gold buttons on his coat. [The Countess said] that she had worked to achieve the marriage of the said Hatton with the late Countess of Lennox, her daughter, but that he would not listen to the proposal for fear of you. Again, that even the Earl of Oxford durst not live with his wife lest he should lose the advantages which he hoped to receive for making love to you, that you were lavish towards all such persons and to all who were engaged in similar intrigues ; for example, that you gave a person of the Bedchamber, named George, a pension of £300 for bringing you the news of the return of Hatton ; that towards all other persons you were very thankless and stingy, and that there were but three or four in your kingdom whom you had ever benefited. The Countess, in fits of laughter, advised me to place my son among the ranks of your lovers as a thing which would do me good service and would entirely disable the Duke, whose affair, if allowed to continue, would be very prejudicial to me. And when I replied that such an act would be interpreted as sheer mockery, she answered

¹ Killigrew was a deadly enemy of Mary, for he had been sent in 1572 to Scotland by Elizabeth to propose the demand by the Scots of the surrender of Mary on condition that she should be executed.

that you were so vain, and had such a good opinion of your beauty—as if you were a sort of goddess from heaven—that she wagered she could easily make you take the matter seriously and would put my son in the way of carrying it through.

“[She said] that you were so fond of exaggerated adulation, such as the assurance that no one dared to look full into your face, since it shone like the sun, that she and other ladies at Court were obliged to employ similar forms of flattery; that on her last appearance before you she and the late Countess of Lennox scarcely ventured to interchange glances for fear of bursting into laughter over the way in which they were openly mocking you. She begged me on her return to scold her daughter because she could not persuade her to do likewise; and as for your daughter Talbot she was assured that she would never fail to sneer at you. The said Lady Talbot, immediately upon her return, after she had made her obeisance to you and taken the oath as one of your servants, related it to me as a mere empty pretence, and begged me to receive a similar act of homage, one which she felt, however, more deeply and rendered absolutely to me. This for a long time I refused, but in the end, disarmed by her tears, I let her yield it to me, she declaring that she would not for worlds be in personal attendance upon you, for fear lest if you were angry you would treat her as you did her Cousin Skedmur (whose finger you broke, pretending to those at Court that it was caused by the fall of a chandelier), or as you did another, who while waiting on you at table received a great cut on the hand from a knife from you. In a word, from these latter details and the rumours of common gossip you can see

that you are made game of and mimicked by your ladies as if they were at a play, and even by my women also, though, when I perceived it, I swear to you that I forbade my women to have anything to do with the matter.

“In addition the said Countess once informed me that you wanted to induce Rolson¹ to make love to me and attempt to dishonour me, either literally or by scandalous rumours, and that he had instructions to this effect from your own lips ; that Ruxby came here about eight years ago to make an attempt on my life after being received by you personally, and that you told him to do all that Walsingham should command and direct.

“That when the Countess was promoting the marriage of her son Charles with one of Lord Paget’s nieces, while you on the other hand wanted to secure her by the exercise of your unlimited and absolute prerogative for a member of the Knollys family, she had raised an outcry against you and declared it was pure tyranny that you should want to carry off all the heiresses of the country according to your own fancy, and that you had disgracefully abused the said Paget, but that in the end the nobility of the kingdom would not stand it, even if you appealed to other than those whom she knew well.

“Il y a environ quatre ou cinq ans que, vous estant malade et moy aussy au mesme temps, elle me dit que vostre mal provenoit de la closture une fistulle que

¹ Rolson was a gentleman pensioner of Elizabeth who betrayed his father, one of the conspirators who engaged in 1570 with the sons of the Earl of Derby in a plot to convey Mary out of Chatsworth through a window. She mentioned him four years later in a letter to “Monsieur de Glasgo” with the greatest abhorrence, both as filial traitor and as author of a design to poison her.

vous aviez dans une jambe : et que son doute, venant à perdre vos moys, vous mourriez bientost.

"In this she rejoiced on the strength of a vain notion she has long cherished, based on the predictions of one named John Lenton, and upon an old book which foretold your death by violence and the accession of another queen, whom she interpreted to be me. She merely regretted that according to this book it was predicted that the queen who was to succeed you would only reign three years and would die, like you, a violent death. All this was actually represented in a picture in the book, the contents of the last page of which she would never disclose to me.

"She knows that I always looked upon all this as pure nonsense, but she did her utmost to ingratiate herself with me and even to ensure the marriage of my son with my niece Arbella.

"In conclusion I once more swear to you on my faith and honour that all this is perfectly true, and that where your honour is concerned it was never my intention to wrong you by revealing it, and that it should never be known through me, who hold it all to be very false. If I may have an hour's speech with you I will give more particulars of the names, times, places, and other circumstances to prove to you the truth of this and other things, which I reserve until fully assured of your friendship. This I desire more than ever. Further, if I can this time secure it you will find no relative, friend, nor even subject more loyal and affectionate than myself. For God's sake, believe the assurance of one who will and can serve you.

"From my bed, forcing my arm and my sufferings to satisfy and obey you.

"MARIE R."

This letter, of course, is concentrated venom. Mary could embroider with her pen as well as with her clever needle. She could entwine and order her imaginings with magnificent effect. She had heaps of fantasy and romance and could employ them more than puckishly. The document is a *tour de force* of craft and power. Its double aim is unerring. With this one poisoned shaft the writer seeks to destroy the security of the two Elizabeths—so similar in their autocratic natures, their vitality and joy in intrigue. A fiendish delight lurks behind every suggestion aimed at the person and amours of Elizabeth. Even these, taking into account the ghastly suspense of her imprisonment and the wreckage of her mental balance, might be forgiven to Mary. But the statement suggesting Elizabeth's betrayal of her State secrets to a mere envoy like the Frenchman Simier, while admitting him to the grossest intimacy, is too wickedly sane in its vindictiveness to be forgivable. In her most impulsive, most overwrought moments Lady Shrewsbury would never have dared to suggest a thing so base or so impossible. The letter condemns itself throughout, and undermines the truth of many of the previous wild complaints by Mary of the Countess's words and deeds. Naturally, every breath of scandal attaching to the Queen's intercourse with the innumerable persons of the opposite sex with whom her position brought her into contact was treasured and retailed in all directions, and exaggerated versions of every incident would, of course, be transmitted to Mary. To achieve such a letter she had only to collect the tit-bits, put them into the mouth of one she hated, profess to expose all the rottenness of Elizabeth's so-called friends, and serve up the whole gallimaufry with a crown-

ing *bonne bouche* in the assertion of her own innocence, truth, and loyalty. The Arch-Tempter guided her pen in this hour, and that last plea of weakness and despair, “de mon lit, forçant mon bras et mes douleurs pour vous satis fayre et obéir,” is scarcely convincing. The devil was assuredly in it, and she must have saved up all her energy for such a production. Don Bernardino de Mendoza, when alluding in a letter of 1585 to the release of Shrewsbury from his task and his retirement to his estates, declared that he thanked the Queen for delivering him from two devils, the Scottish Queen and his wife :—

“El conde de Shreubury ha partido para ir en Darbissier siendo lugarteniente de dos condados de Darbi y Stafford. Besso los manos a la Regna de Inglaterra, diziendole, hazello por havelle librado de dos diablos, que heran la Regna de Scozia y su muger.”

This is probably a partial exaggeration. Of course Elizabeth could not free him from his wife. It was her pleasurable business to bring them together again. A lengthy matter and badly begun !

CHAPTER XIX

HAMMER AND TONGS

THERE is no other title possible for the condition of things with which this chapter deals. That public vindication of the Earl, it will be remembered, was in 1584, coupled with his wife's formal disclaimer of the scandal circulated about him. Still there is nothing to heal the estrangement, and the Earl, hearing disturbing reports, writes to Lord Burghley from his country seclusion in the autumn of the following year, 1585 :—

“My noble good Lord,

“Since my coming into the country, my wife and her children have not ceased to inform her Majesty, most slanderously of me, that I have broken her Highness's order ; and at length they have obtained her gracious letters, and Mr. Secretary's to me, the which I have answered, and sent up my servant Christopher Copley with them ; praying your Lordship that he may, with your favour, attend on you, and acquaint you thoroughly from time to time with my causes, and that it would please you to further him with your advice and continuance of your good favour. My Lord, she makes all means she can to be with me, and her children have her living, whereunto I will never agree, for if I have the one, I will have the other, which was thought reason-

able by the Lord Chancellor, and the Lord of Leicester ; but by her letters she desires to come to me herself, but speaks no word of her living.¹ I have been much troubled with her, and almost never quiet to satisfy her greedy appetite for money, to pay for her purchases to set up her children ; besides the danger I have lived in, to be compassed daily with those that most maliciously hated me, that if I were out of the way, presently they might be in my place. It were better we lived as we do, for in truth, I cannot away with her children, but have them in jealousy ; for till Francis Talbot's death, she and her children sought my favour, but since those times they have sought for themselves and never for me. Thus, with my hearty commendations, I commit your good Lordship to the tuition of the Almighty.

“Sheffield, this twenty-third of October, 1585.

“Your Lordship's most faithful friend,

“G. SHREWSBURY.”

“My noble good Lord,

“Finding you so honest and constant a friend to me, I have been willing, and yet doubtful to trouble you with my gouty fist, unless I had matters of some importance, knowing your Lordship so troubled with her Majesty's affairs ; but now, perceiving what untrue surmises have and are daily invented by my wife and her children of me, and I think will be during their lives, I am therefore to request your Lordship thus much ; if they shall exclaim of me from time to time without cause as they do, considering how manifestly they have disproved in all their accounts, that they may make trial of their complaints against me before they are heard ; and so shall her Majesty and her Council be less

¹ i.e. Of her keep and its cost.

troubled with these untrue surmises, and by the Grace of God, my doings and dealings have and shall be such as I wish, my wife and her imps, who I know to be mortal enemies, might daily see into my doings which I took for no less but they will do their best. So, wishing your Lordship health as my own, I take my leave.

“Sheffield, this ninth of November, 1585.

“Your Lordship’s most faithful ever assured friend,

“G. SHREWSBURY.”

The word “imp” in Elizabethan times really only implied “offshoot” and “offspring” and was used also in an agricultural sense. But the application of it here is maliciously grotesque to the modern sense. The word strikes one oddly also in the epitaph of the son of Leciester, the baby Lord Denbigh, described on his tomb as “this noble imp.”

On November 9th from Sheffield Castle Shrewsbury reopens his formal campaign, and the real tussle in London begins. Lord Leicester, his good friend, is no longer on the spot, owing to his absence in the Netherlands. In the long letter to this Lord, quoted hereafter, though belonging to a date slightly previous, it will be seen that mention is made of the Queen’s preliminary arbitration in the quarrel. The main points showing the fluctuations of this strife are set forth in the State documents, and the whole of Vol. CCVII is devoted to them, showing that the years 1586-7 are given up to a regular formal ballyragging on both sides. On the 31st of January, 1586, the Earl is found appealing to Walsingham, requiring that his wife should be ordered to make public retractation of her slanderous speeches about him. (This evidently refers to fresh backbiting,

for as regards the great scandal already named matters had been thrashed out long since.) He adds that he must bend his mind to trouble though his years do otherwise move him ; meanwhile he has brought a suit against Charles Cavendish and Henry Beresford, accusing them of the same slander. The Queen intervenes and requests him to stay the suits. Shrewsbury, however, persists on the score of the statute "*De scandalis magnatum.*"¹ The Cavendishes on their side pleaded for the abandonment of the two suits just named and for the impartial examination of witnesses. Evidence is next included by Shrewsbury's servants of the prejudicial statements of Beresford, while the Cavendishes employed a servant of the Countess to attest the great partiality with which the examination of Beresford was conducted, to the disadvantage of the Countess' case. Upon this the Queen sent to Sir Charles Cavendish for details of the exact state of affairs between his mother and stepfather. These he submitted to Walsingham in March. On May the 12th the Queen wrote to the Earl expressing her earnest desire that all controversies between him and his lady and her younger sons should cease, and by her mediation be brought to some good end and accord. She reminded him that his years required repose, especially of the mind, and stated that she enclosed an order for the settlement of the dispute, the result of her conference with the Lord Chancellor, the Earl of Leicester, and the Treasurer and Chief Secretary of State.

Lady Shrewsbury meanwhile objected strongly to all the Earl's proceedings, accused him of displacing cer-

¹ The Act referred to is one passed in the reign of Richard II to punish the slander of high personages or officials.

tain of her tenants, and assured the Queen that he refused to restrain the slander suits. This is a fragment of her many complaints, and is endorsed :—

“Objections used by the Countess to the Earl of Shrewsbury’s answers, who has not obeyed the Queen’s last letter.

“To all these answers drawn by my Lord’s learned counsel, as may appear, who never want words to answer whatsoever :—

“I allege that for her Majesty’s order I must appeal to her own gracious remembrance, which particularly was expressed by her last letter to my Lord, though not obeyed. And (I) do avow on my whole credit with her Majesty for ever that the things he hath entered to is worth nine hundred pounds a year, and that he hath repaid but eight and fifty pound of near two thousand pounds, which in that (case ?) would have been to my sons and me. That he displaceth sundry tenants, and as myself allegeth meaneth to continue the suits.

“In all these things I most humbly beseech speedy redress if they be true, and discredit and her Majesty’s disfavour if they be found untrue.

“May, 1586.”

On June 15th Shrewsbury, writing to Walsingham, begged him to favour his suit against the Countess, and asked that the Queen should banish her from Court, adding that he was ashamed to think of his choice of such a creature, and piteously entreated Walsingham to persuade his son Gilbert Talbot to leave “that wicked woman’s company.”

The action went through against Beresford, for the

next item in the State record is a note upon the York Assizes in June. At the same time the Countess petitioned the Council denying the charges of the Earl that she had ever maintained her servant Beresford against him. Next follows an important note by Charles Cavendish on the force and effect of the Queen's order which was intended to produce a united reconciliation and cohabitation.

The Earl was by this time slowly coming to terms, but he required that Henry Cavendish should be reinstated in Chatsworth and assured of certain lands, while his debts, it was stipulated, were to be paid by the Countess. The Countess and her two sons, on the other hand, stated that they had been much out of pocket for three years by the Earl's aggressive proceedings, and begged for redress.

Into this hotchpotch are flung notes of the yearly allowances which the Earl gave his Countess when they were together, of the amount of rent paid by certain tenants, and all other disputes about the jointures of the Countess, leases, houses, lands, and other property settled upon various members of the family by father and mother. Not a single scrap of personal or real estate seems to have been forgotten. The unhappy couple tussled especially hard over their plate. In the Hatfield MSS. catalogue the inquisitive will find a full list of the articles. They include "a podinger" (of which the dish seems to be in my Lady's hands, while her Lord retains the lid), a "great silver salt having many little ones within it to be drawn out," one "George," enamelled white and set with diamonds, costing £38, "a cup of assay," gilt "talbots," ewers, plates, standing-pots, bowls, candlesticks, trenchers, "parcel gilt and double gilt."

Then there was the same pull-devil pull-baker business over household linen, mattresses, and hangings—those hangings which were always such a cause of bother to the couple all through their fifteen years of menage in connection with their troublesome prisoner-guest. The demands of the Earl on his part infuriate his wife, and there is a scornful and sarcastic entry in the Hatfield MSS., endorsed by Burghley, to the effect that “the parcels above demanded by the Earl are things of small value and mere trifles for so great and rich a nobleman to bestow on his wife in nineteen years.” The Countess then reminds him of her share in the way of gifts: “the Earl hath received of her at several times, pots, flagons, dishes, porringers, warming-pans, boiling-pot, a charger or voider of silver, with many other things she now remembereth not. Besides, better than £1000 of linen consumed by him, being carried to sundry of his houses to serve his Lordship’s turn. And with his often being at Chatsworth with his charge and most of his stuff there spoiled.”

In addition, she quotes an annual contribution of 30 to 40 mattresses, 20 quilts, etc. etc.

All these absurd and pitiful obstacles made the Queen’s order for cohabitation very distasteful, and in July the Earl lashed out in an important and emphatic letter to Court. His wife had of her own will left him, and he did not see why he should receive her under his roof now simply because she offered to come. “It appeareth,” goes on the statement, “by her words and deeds she doth deadly hate him, and hath called him knave, fool, and beast to his face, and hath mocked and mowed at him.” Here follow two letters from the contending parties. Her Ladyship had written to my Lord on

August 4th, 1586, to which he sends the long reply quoted. She again writes on August 11th.

Earl of Shrewsbury to his Countess.

“Wife, in the three first lines of your last letter dated Thursday, 4 August, 1586, you hold yourself importunate for demanding my plate and other things, part whereof, in the same letter you confess, which at your being with me you desired to have, and the residue of the plate and hangings you pass over in silence, for which I take light occasion to be displeased with you by writing (as you say) and demand this question of me—What new offence is committed since her Majesty reconciled us? To the first part of your letter I answer that there is no creature more happy and more fortunate than you have been for when you were defamed and to the world a byword, when you were St. Loo’s widow, I covered those imperfections (by my intermarriage) with you and brought you to all the honour you have, and to the most of that wealth you now enjoy. Therefore, you have cause to think yourself happier than others, for I know not what she is within this realm that may compare with you either in living or goods; and yet you cannot be contented. The reconciliation that her Majesty moved betwixt us was—that I should take a probation of your good behaviour toward me for a year, and send you to Wingfield upon my charges, to which I yielded (being much pressed by her Highness) with these conditions: that I should not bed nor board with you; those servants that were now about you, I would put from you and put others to you; your children, nor Gilbert Talbot, nor his wife should come at you whilst you were with me; your living I would

have, and my goods (which you and William Cavendish had taken) I would have restored. Yet you still pressed her Majesty further, that you might come to me at my house to Chelsea, which I granted, and at your coming I told you that you were welcome upon the Queen's commandment, but though you were cleared in her Majesty's sight for all offences, yet I had not cleared you, nor could trust you till you did confess that you had offended me. Nor can I be contented to accept of you, if you do not this in writing and upon your knees and before such as her Majesty shall appoint. It was promised that I should find you obedient unto me in all points. I thought it unfit that there should be suits betwixt your children and me, if I should accept of you, which made me to try you, and demand my plate of you, etc. What greater disobedience could you shew unto me than deny me that which is my own? You will hardly suffer me to be master of any of yours, when you cannot be pleased to restore me mine own. Is it fit that you should gage my plate and mine arms upon it? Can you do me greater dishonour? You say that, if your estate were able, you would not stand with me upon such toys. You never esteemed how largely you cut quarters out of my cloth; but you have carried always this mind towards me, that, if you once got anything of me, you cannot be contented to restore it again. As (if you remember) you borrowed £1000 of me, etc., and gave me your bill for it; I was not ignorant that I could not recover any money by it, but it is a witness that you had the money and yet you never paid it me again. As touching her Majesty's order for your living, she pronounced the

same at Greenwich, and ordered me £500 a year and divers other things which they thought fit, and we assented to be set down in the draft of the books, as may appear. And as touching this, that if I did at any time receive you and cohabit with you, the Lords thought it reasonable—and you assented to it—that I should have your living during the time of our cohabitation, and hereupon I refer myself to their opinions. Marry, this difference there was, that if you disliked to cohabit and dwell with me, then your sons to have your living, upon a signification to be made, the form whereof could not be agreed upon, as may appear. Your children's names were used only for this cause, because you were not capable yourself, but they were thought meetest to deal for you, till I liked to take you to me. And I think their commission extended to it, or else you would not have laboured their great pains which they took in it, and they would have been glad then that I should have taken you and your living also, which your children desired not, if I could have agreed to it. I am sorry to spend all these words with you, but assure yourself this shall be the last time that I will write much to you in the matter or trouble myself; and likewise, if you intend to come to me, advise yourself in these points before remembered, that I will have you to confess that you have offended me, and are heartily sorry for it, in writing, and upon your knees (without either if or and). Your living you shall bring with you to maintain you with, and to pay such debts as is expressed in the consideration of the deed. For neither by the said deed, nor yet by her Majesty's order, it was meant that your sons

should have your living, which appertaineth to me, being my enemies, and have sought my defamation and destruction of my house, and I to have you without that which the laws giveth me. My goods you shall restore me before we come together. And, if you cannot be content to do this I protest before God, I will never have you come upon me, whatever shall [happen]. I could allege many causes why you have thus disobediently behaved yourself against me. One chief cause was when I had made you my sole executrix you persuaded me to make a lease in trust to two of your friends for threescore years, minding thereby to have the benefit thereof by the executorship. You caused me in my extremity of sickness to pass my lands by deed enrolled—to your friends—in bargain and sale, and the indenture which did lease the houses was not enrolled, so that if I had then died, the same might have been embezzled, and so my posterity for that land in the case of St. Loo. But, when I perceived in what danger I stood, I put you out of my will, and have since started to remedy those my great imperfections that I was not able to benefit my children nor recompense my servants. At length it came to your ear, though there were not many that knew it, and then you began to play your part, and hath used me ever since in such spiteful sort as I was not able to bear or abide it: and this is one of the causes that you deal with me in this wise as you do, and not such causes as you allege to her Majesty of my dislike of you. All offences done by you are esteemed nothing as was the offence of Henry Beresford, that was found guilty of such slanderous speeches that he had spoken of me, that, if they had been true, as they be most

false, had overthrown me and my house. Also, in regard to your confederacy with him and his son, I cannot but remember that the young fellow should swear he never spoke any such speeches by me as was laid in my action which, till it was discovered, moved great favour towards Beresford, and had like both to have abused both her Majesty and Mr. Secretary, and clearly to have dishonoured me (as Mr. Secretary informed me). This I take to be a grievous offence done unto me. I thought good not to omit this, but to put you in remembrance thereof, what great favour you have showed him, and was very unfit to have been supported by you, when the case did touch me so near, which I look for at your hands that you will confess.

“And thus I end.

“From Chelsea the 5th of August, 1586.”

Endorsed: “The copy of my Lord’s letter to the Countess his wife, V. August, 1586.”

The Countess of Shrewsbury to the Earl.

“My Lord, I hold myself most unfortunate that upon so slight occasion it pleaseth you to write in this form to me: for what new offence is committed since her Majesty reconciled us? If the denial of the plate be the only cause, why then, my Lord, the true affirmation thereof in my letter is more than my words, neither such a trifle I hoped could have wrought so unkind effects; and were my state able I would not stand upon such toys as those you speak of. Touching my son’s living, that is no new cause, for it was long ago moved by you, and could

never be consented to by us, in respect of the reasons in my last letter alleged. . . . My Lord, I know not how justly you can term me insatiable in my desire of gaining, for my losses have been so great, with my charges, that makes me desire honestly to discharge my debt with my children's lands, which you have no need of, and will not in my time discharge them though we should live on nothing ; and I am greedy of nobody's lands, but would keep the rest, which by all law, order, and conscience they ought to possess. Neither my case and fortune hath been to maintain my miseries with untruths, for receiving daily manifest discourtesies I need not blush to speak truly.

"I assure you, my Lord, my meaning is not to molest or grieve you with demanding, neither I trust it can be thought greediness to demand nothing, for I desire no more than her Majesty's order giveth, and wish your happy days to be many and good. . . .

"Touching the postscript, my desire hath been so great to be with you and save your long delays, that made me be an humble suitor to her Majesty to be earnest with you, but not as you write.

"For the other that I labour your stay, I assure you, my Lord, I did not, but yet would be very glad that all were perfected here and then to go down with you, and hoped also ere this we should have been on our way into the country.

"So, beseeching Almighty God to make you better conceive of me, I end, wishing myself, without offence, with you,

"Your obedient faithful wife,

"ELIZABETH SHREWSBURY.

"Richmond, this Thursday."

Like a pedal note through the long jangle runs the Queen's order, upon which Sir Charles Cavendish comments more than once. The main part of it, of course, deals with the disposal of property, the outcome of the affair being that the couple should travel down to the country together, and the lands belonging to the Cavendishes revert to them. A footnote to one copy of the order says that the meaning of this is not to take away anything in the way of concessions already arranged, but only "to better the Countess's part."

Elizabeth was accused of partiality by the Earl. Her own attitude towards him had been rather like that of some of his children, for she had always made use of his possessions to suit her own purpose without any intention of repayment. It is possible that from the innate stinginess of her disposition she may have resented the fashion in which he coupled accusations against his wife's rapacity with his sore, justifiable complaint that Mary's imprisonment had impoverished him. In a letter to Lord Leicester he can no longer control his feelings against the Queen. Though written in 1585, it is quoted here as being pertinent.

Bitter and rambling, it is in reply to one from Leicester, which shows plainly that the Queen, as arbitrator, has thrown her weight into the balance with the Countess. The document is quoted by Lodge from a rough copy endorsed "The Earl of Shrewsbury's answer to the Earl of Leicester's letter . . . ultimo Aprilis, 1585," and is therefore unsigned.

"My good Lord,

"Since her Majesty hath declared her mind in the matter betwixt me and my wife, and doubts not but

in every respect I will observe it as her Highness hath set it down and that the Lord Chancellor should take order with me for the accomplishment thereof, well weighing her Majesty's hard censure of me and my causes ; since my coming to Chelsea, I have not been well, nor able to return my answer by your Lordship's servant so speedily as I would, but have now thought good to send this bearer, my servant, Christopher Copley, unto your Lordship with this answer ; that as her Majesty doth demand and look for at my hands faith and due obedience, as is the duty of every good subject to spend lands and life in the defence of her Majesty's person and realm, which I and my ancestors have done and am ready at her Majesty's commandment, so, for the maintenance of my honour and credit, do I claim and demand of her Majesty justice and benefit of her Majesty's laws, never denied by her Majesty nor by any of her noble progenitors, to any of the meanest of her subjects before this ; yet not doubting but that her Majesty will have better consideration of me and my cause when she hath thoroughly weighed of it ; and that if she (for all my careful and faithful service, to my great charges above my allowance in the keeping of that Lady for sixteen years last past : with the extraordinary charges and expense of her Majesty's commissioners sent down, as of Sir Walter Mildmay, Mr. Beale, and Sir Ralph Sadler, and others, their horse and men, for so long time as they continued with me), will bestow nothing on me yet I even thought she would have left me with what her Majesty's laws had given me. Since that her Majesty hath set down this hard sentence against me, to my perpetual infamy and dishonour, to be ruled and overrun by my wife, so bad

and wicked a woman, yet her Majesty shall see that I will obey her commandment, though no curse or plague in the earth could be more grievous to me. These offers of my wife's enclosed in your letters I think them very unfit to be offered to me. It is too much to make me my wife's prisoner, and set me down the demesnes of Chatsworth, without the house and other lands leased, which is but a pension in money. I think it stands with reason that I should choose the £500 by year ordered by her Majesty where I like best, according to the rate William Cavendish delivered to my Lord Chancellor ; or else I shall think myself doubly wronged, which I am sure her Majesty will not offer unto me. And thus I commit your Lordship to the tuition of the Almighty."

The last sentence is entirely ironical after the preceding outburst. Leicester was not the man to take spiritual counsel or to bestir himself to his own disadvantage. He was essentially a "trimmer," and the guardianship of the Almighty was only a matter of speech for him. He seems to have remained fairly neutral after this, to judge from what Henry Talbot writes from London on the 6th of August to his father :—

"All your Lordship's affairs here are well ; and your wife doth exclaim against my Lord Leicester, because, as she saith, he hath not been so good as his promise. Her Majesty, praise to God, is well, and marvelleth she can hear nothing from your Lordship, and she useth the best speeches that may be of your Lordship."

To this letter there is a delightful postscript giving a

suggestive and greedy message from one of Shrewsbury's friends :—

“My Lord Mayor hath his humble duty remembered unto your Lordship, and says he hopes your Lordship's bucks are fat this summer.”

So did all the world sponge upon the once wealthy George Talbot.

Another letter from Henry Talbot is a sort of amplification of the attitudes of his Queen and wife, and though he could not but be flattered by that of the first there was everything to torture him acutely in her professions after the treatment he had received :—

“May it please your Honour to be advertised that I came from Court upon the 20th of this present where I left all things very well, and her Majesty saith she doth marvel greatly that she hath received but one letter from your Lordship since your going down. Moreover she herself told me that she marvelled she heard no oftener from you, whom it pleased to term her love, declaring further what care she had of your health, and what a trouble your sickness was unto her ; whereunto I answered that your Lordship's chiefest comfort, and speedy recovery of your health, proceeded from her Majesty's so gracious favour and countenance bestowed upon you ; whereat her Majesty smiled, saying, “Talbot, I have not yet shewed unto him that favour which hereafter we mean to do.”

Words, words ! This was the coin in which Elizabeth paid the faithful among her subjects, her kinsmen included. But to resume the letter : “As touching your wife's causes, she lieth still in Chancery Lane, and

doth give out that she meaneth to continue there and not to go into the country. My Lord, my brother's wife, and her brother, the Knight"—meaning Sir Charles Cavendish—"do attend very diligently at Court, and little respect there is had of them; nevertheless they cease not to follow, to the end the world may say they are in credit."

The nearest approach to a final and reasonable settlement was suggested by the Earl's proposal to settle £1500 a year on his wife, with Chatsworth House and other lands, under certain conditions, a document which raised a good deal of discussion on both sides. Out of this cauldron of anger, misery, and sordidness emerged at last once more the royal order, final and distinct: The Earl was to receive his wife, and take probation of her obedience for one year, and if she proved forgetful of her duty was to place her in her house at Chatsworth. Rents and assurance of lands were also clearly set forth, and it was ordained that all actions for plate, jewels, and hangings were to be stayed.

The Countess had the last word on this, for her practical instinct prompted her instantly to request that her Majesty should appoint someone to be an eye-witness "in house" with the Earl and herself. Further, she begged that she might not, failing their final agreement, be confined to Chatsworth House only, and besought her Majesty "to conclude her honourable and godly work" as speedily as possible.

Early in August, 1586, the Queen passed this final order of reconciliation. Assured of the willingness of the couple to cease their strife, she summoned them to her presence, and "in many good words showed herself very glad thereof, and the Earl and Countess in good

sort departed together very comfortably." Wingfield was their destination, and was named in the original order drawn up already in March.

THE QUEEN'S ORDER.

"An order pronounced by her Majesty between the Earl of Shrewsbury and the Countess his wife in the presence of the Secretary (Walsingham).

"That the said Earl shall give present order for the conveying of the said Countess to some one of his principal manor houses in Derbyshire, furnished for her to remain in, with liberty to go either to Chatsworth or Hardwick, and to return to the Earl's house at her pleasure.

"That the said Earl shall allow to the said Countess towards the defraying of the charges of household £300 and fuel until he shall yield to cohabitation, and doth also promise in respect of her Majesty's mediation further gratuity of yearly provision for the maintenance of her said house.

"That the said Earl shall appoint four or five of his own men to attend upon the said Countess and shall pay them their wages.

"The said Earl promiseth her Majesty to resort sometimes to the house where the said Countess shall lie, as also to send for the said Countess upon notice given of her desire to some other house where he himself shall remain, and in case she shall so behave herself toward him as one that by good and dutiful ways [?] will do her best endeavour to recover his former good opinion and love, then it is to be hoped that continual cohabitation will follow, which her Majesty greatly desires."

All this looks highly promising. It arouses glowing hopes in the minds of the onlookers that after many toils and dangers, social and political, such a man and such a woman, born to eminence and possessed of great qualities, will enjoy many happy years together, quit of their old intolerable burden, the care of "the Daughter of Debate." Such a letter as this from the faithful Gilbert Dickenson, which welcomes my Lord home to his manor and his acres, telling of the folk who gather to greet him, and of the fatted calf in preparation, completes the picture :—

"May it please your Lo. to understand that divers honest men have heard of your Lo. coming home and would have come to meet your Lo. but that I have stayed them till I hear further of your Lo. pleasure ; and there is such running from house to house to tell that your Lo. did lie at Wingfield all night and everyone preparing to meet your L.

"Your Lo. should come into the country with such love as never did man in England, which is a greater comfort to us than any worldly riches, and for sheep, oxen, and lambs shall not be wanting nor anything which can be got, God willing."

Alack for love and hope ! Only two months after this stately cavalcade of Earl and Lady travelled home, the Countess addressed the Treasurer again. She had sore complaints to make of her husband.

"My singular good Lord," she wrote, "I most humbly and heartily thank your Lo. for your letter sent by my son William Cavendish. It is my greatest comfort that it pleaseth your Lo. to have care of me, else grief and displeasure would have ended my days.

Since my coming into the country my Lo. my husband hath come to his home Wingfield, where I most remain, not past three times ; more I have not seen him ; he stayed not over a day at a time at his being here. . . . Since my coming down, he hath allowed me gross provisions as beef, mutton, and corn to serve my house, but now not long since he hath sent me word that he will not allow me any further and doth withdraw all his provision, not suffering me to have sufficient fire.”¹ She goes on to say that if all were as her Majesty desired and assured her, namely, that she might be always with her husband, she would not need such allowances of provision, etc. etc.

This attitude of the Earl strikes one as a little petty at this juncture. He had, after all, large estates and many houses, and there was no need to starve his lady out of Wingfield, even if their characters and moods were finally and utterly incompatible.

All through these years 1586–7 he was still worried by Gilbert’s affairs. The letters which follow explain themselves.

The first is a denunciation of Gilbert’s extravagant wife :—

“ Son Gilbert,

“ I thank you for your pains taken in certifying me of those your sundry news, being the very same in effect that I heard of the day before I received your letter. For answer thereto, you shall understand my meaning towards you is as good as it was at that our departure you put me in mind of ; but for any help about the payment of your debts I do advise you

¹ State MSS.

altogether to rely on yourself, and the best discharge you shall be able to make thereof, than any ways upon me ; who, least my silence in that behalf, and at this time, might breathe some hope agreeable to your conceived opinion, do in sadness, as you did in jest, return you a short answer for your long warning ; willing you either to provide for yourself, as you may, or else be disappointed ; for during my life, I would not have you to expect any more at my hands than I have already allowed you, whereof I know you might live well, and clear from danger of any, as I did, if you had that governance over your wife, as her pomp and courtlike manner of life were some deal assuaged. And, for mine own part, and your good, I do wish you had but half so much to relieve your necessities as she and her mother have spent in seeking, through malice, mine overthrow and dishonour, and I in defending my just cause against them : by means of whose evil dealings, together with other bargains wherein I have entangled myself of late, I am not able either to help you, or store myself for any other purpose I shall take in hand these twelve months. Thus praying God to bless you, I bid you farewell.

“Sheffield Lodge, the 17th of June, 1587.

“Your loving father,

“G. SHREWSBURY.”

The next is from the newest mediator between Talbot and Cavendish, Sir Henry Lee, a long-winded but delightful personage of romantic and fantastic temperament. Lodge assures us that he was “bred from infancy in Courts and camps,” and that this induced him not only to take a leading part in tilts and tourna-

ments, but led to his assumption of the "self-created title of Champion of the Queen," and that he made a vow to present himself in the tiltyard in that character on the 27th of November in every year, till disabled by age. This vow he kept, and upon his retirement at the age of sixty installed as his successor the Earl of Cumberland in the presence of Queen and Court, "offering his armour at her Majesty's feet, and clothing himself in a black velvet coat and cap."

Sir Henry Lee to Lord Talbot.

"Sir,

"On Monday last I received your letter ; on Thursday I went to Sheffield, my Lord, your father's, where I found him much amended, after his physic, of the gout, which took him at Brierly, and troubled him until then. My being there made him much better disposed, of whom I received many sundry kindnesses and more favours than I have or ever may deserve. Acknowledgment is small requital, but that I do and will, to him, yourself, and yours, in as sundry ways as by my wit, will, and fortune I may. Dinner done, and all rising saving his Lordship and my poor self, I told him I had written to you, according to his liberty given me upon such talk as his Lordship had last with me at Worksop ; that I received an answer which then I presented unto him. I left him alone ; Mr. Henry Talbot, Roger Portington, your very good friend, with myself, standing at the window, where I, that knew the sundry contents of the letter, might see any alteration in himself, as they that stood by imagined by his sighs, guessed according to their humours. Your letter perused (and well marked, as it did well appear unto me

by his speeches immediately after), rising from the board, with more colour in his cheeks than ordinary, he led me by the hand into his withdrawing chamber, where he told me he did well perceive the contents of your letter ; that you had been long a disobedient child to him ; that you joined and practiced against him, and with such as sought his overthrow, and consequently your own undoing, and the espials and parties you had in his house did show your care to be more for that he had himself ; but, withal, he knew you had many good parts, but those overruled by others that should be better governed by yourself. More regard, he says, to your old father, would do well ; who has been ever loving unto you and must be requited with more love and obedience, or else (by his divination) your credit will slowly increase. He is glad, as he says, that you live in those parts (but he speaks ironia) where some good may be learned, but more to be shunned ; yet all well where grace is, so you are able to go through withal ; but for the feeding of such vain time and superfluous excess as should do best for yourself to diminish, he is not able, he says, and I fear will never be willing, to maintain. He reckoned how many had been in hand with him for the payment of your debts ; my Lord Treasurer and others. His answer was that, through the wilfulness of him, who shunned his advice, and the imperfections of others, his undoing should not grow, that they themselves might have cause to pity him in his age, through his folly and their persuasions. There, my Lord, he told that three thousand pounds nearly went out of his living to his children, and many other sums to small purpose to remember. He confessed he sent you such a letter as you write of, and

written by a man of his, but altogether by his direction. But he was old, lame of the gout, and now no more able to write himself. He spake much of your inconstancy in your friendships, and especially to my Lord of Leicester ; sometimes, as you favoured, there was not such ; and laboured himself to rely more upon him, altogether misliking such humours as favoured and disfavoured in such sort, and in so short a time ; but, for himself, he would fly such variety, and perform his friendship and faith. Truly, my Lord, he used many of these speeches before I interrupted him, and good reason I had to forbear, for he spoke not without grief, as I guess, and passion, I am sure ; therefore [I] thought best to stay until the storm was somewhat overblown. At the last I besought him to tell me whether these old grievances were not remitted upon conference between yourselves ; and whether your abode there was not with his good allowance, that you should procure yourself to be joined with him in his offices ; further, that you should, by good means, procure some honourable office for your better understanding. All this he did not deny, but, touching his discourse, I think not fit to set it down, my messenger is so uncertain, and my meaning to do good, if I may, but no hurt. He is old and unwieldy and deceived by such he trusteth, and you shun to assist him, and therefore will let out all ; but that I believe not. I found one thing in your letter : I said that I feared, and made me sorry ; that your favouring so much your own credit, and finding so small means to answer your creditors, you might fall into some hard course ; and, before these words were all out of my mouth, he said, ‘Yea, marry, some desperation.’ Therefore I took hold : ‘Good my Lord, license me

to speak with your favour, that speak nothing by practice again, but through a dutiful mind to you, now in years, and for yours, by course of nature likely to succeed you. If he should, as you have termed it, take any desperate way, pass into those parts which this doubtful time brings, to many dangers, and especially to our nation, were not this peril great, and, by presumption, not to be recovered? You cannot be ignorant, for all your mislike, what a son you have; esteemed of the highest, favoured of the best, and the best judgments, and how much he differs from other men's sons of your own conditions; so much your love, care, and regard should be the more by how much your loss were more (to be balanced by reason) than all the rest put together. Your country may and will challenge a part and party in him, as a wise man, fit and able to serve it. You yet find not what a Lord Talbot you have; but if he should by any extraordinary accident be taken from you, and not to be recovered, yourself, with your grief, would accompany your white hair to your end with a grave full of cares; and who doth sooner enter into desperation than great wits accompanied with mighty and honourable hearts, which hardly can away with want, but never with discredit?' This, my Lord, sunk somewhat into him. He confessed much of this. He mused long, and spake little: he stayed, standing long, without complaining of his legs (by reason he was earnest) one hour and a half at the least before we parted. So, in many doubts, I left him, minding to send such letters as you required, to Welbeck and thence to be sent to you: wherewith I took my leave.

"I will never take upon me to advise you. You see

now what passed, and upon what grounds ; therefore resolve, upon temperate blood and good judgment, and free advice, for the time present : remembering both love and duty, and that you deal with a kind man. I wish a sudden journey, at the least to see him ; he must needs take it well, and I know your age may endure it ; your friends desire it, and I among the rest (to see you ere I go from these parts) that loveth you, whose being here with my Lady, would have made this country to me far otherwise than it is, and my abode much longer than it is like to be. I have troubled you long. The news is that my Lady Talbot, the widow, and your sister my Lady Mary, with my Lady Manners, as I take it came to Sheffield this night past. I think my Lord will to Hatfield the next week that cometh, or the week following, with such company as he hath, but the certainty I know not : but whether he go there, or no, I wish you would haste to meet him. My brother, Mr. Portington, Mr. Lascelles, with myself, and Mr. Fawley, recommendeth our love and service to your good Lordship. I beseech you let me be remembered humbly unto my Lady, and to good Sir Charles Candishe and his family, wishing them both the best happiness.

“From Lettwell, the 13th of August, 1587.

“Your Lordship’s poor and faithful friend ever,

“HENRY LEE.”

The Earl of Shrewsbury to Sir Henry Lee.

“Good Sir Henry Lee,

“I have perused that enclosed letter you sent me within yours, and do account you most faithful and forward to do good where you profess friendship.

Neither can the eloquence of the one, nor the earnest desire of the other, persuade me to do otherwise in that matter than I have already, upon good consideration, determined. My son compares my words with his own conceits, and means to save his credit as shall content me, but when he sealethe I will assure. I proposed to leave him in better case than my father left me, and if I give him so much as I cannot withhold, I am not in his debt. I forgave him all his faults, but I promised him not that I would trust him. He can bring the honour of his house now to make for his purpose, but he remembereth not how he went about to dishonour it. He laboured not to make sure my Lord of Leicester of their side that went about to accuse his father of treason. He did not countenance his wife and her mother against me in all their bad actions. His deceits never moved me to be displeased. Well, if they did, I pronounce forgiveness thereof to his friend, as I have done before unto him. He knoweth whereof his grief grew ; let him henceforth avoid the occasions. He says he is not overruled by his wife, but attributes that to my speeches : but I say, if he be not he will quickly recover, and live better of his annuity than I could do when I bare his name, with less allowance. Yet (notwithstanding his doubtful words of your welcome hither, in respect you have moved me for his good) I beseech you come ten times for every one past ; assuring you that the most eloquent orator in England can do no more with me than you have, till I perceive a new course. Thus, with my hearty commendations, I bid you farewell.

“Sheffield, September 6th, 1587.

“Your loving friend,

“G. SHREWSBURY.”

The long letter from Sir Henry Lee gives a pathetic and vivid portrait of the old Government official who feels himself at last like a worn-out tool, unloved, unnecessary to the world—save when his position as a premier peer required him to raise levies for the defence and contest of Ireland, or county matters called him from retirement in his military and judicial capacity. To the very end he was a prompt official, and his family motto, “*Prest d’Accomplir*,” his watchword. In 1586 he was still among those who receive urgent orders to arm and prepare bodies of Derbyshire fighting men, and must give his attention to the most absurd details of uniform, such as the “convenient hose and doublet, and a cassock of motley . . . either sea-green colour or russet,” noted among the regulations issued by his fellows of the Privy Council.

These things are, however, only flashes in the pan. He is getting old. All the world was growing old, and all his contemporaries, in the phrase of the day, were “a little thing sickish.” The intrepid and laborious Walsingham is described as being “troubled with his old diseases: the tympany and carnosity,” and so is absent from Court. Letters still flowed in to the Earl, news of the Netherlands campaign, from the now depressed Lord Leicester, the Governor, news of the Queen’s movements, of Spain, of the legal strife of his contemporaries and friends. They are only sticks and straws flung into the deep and turgid current of his lonely, embittered life.

It was in the midst of such disputes as these that the summons had come to him from Fotheringay.

CHAPTER XX

FADING GLORIES

HIS own household and many of his tenants were faithful to the Earl Marshal. Fortunately he had not at the moment much leisure for private broodings. The Babington conspiracy had churned up the old alarms about Mary, the Royal Commission for her trial was being appointed, and, though he was fortunately able to plead illness as an excuse for once more repairing to London to take his seat in this important meeting of the Council, he was obliged by letter to Burghley to assert his willingness to add his name to the decree of the Privy Council in regard to Mary's sentence, at the same time enclosing his seal and giving the Lord Treasurer full authority to sign for him. Did he at the moment of writing recall that broidered motto which must have flashed at him many times from the dais which his prisoner contrived for herself in her imprisonment: "*En ma fin est mon commencement*"? If so, the pride and pathos of it must have struck home terribly. For he too was nearing his end. He too had naught but sorrow in his heir, and though Gilbert, Edward, and Henry Talbot still lived to carry on his name, it could not be in a very hopeful spirit that he thought upon the continuance of his line so long as he apprehended the renewal of family strife and could not forgive or love again his high-handed lady.

Many things had happened to Mary since they parted, notably the failure of the last great conspiracy for her freedom. Of all these he was fully informed, and sums up her affairs in a single phrase in the ensuing letter :—

*“ To the Right Honourable my verie good Lord the
Lord Burghley, Lord Thresorer of England.*

“ My noble good Lord,

“ I have received your Lordship’s letters both of the 12th November and the 14th of the same, whereby I find myself greatly beholden unto your Lordship for your good remembrance of me, with the proceeding of the foul matters of the Scots Queen ; sentence whereof, I understand by your Lordship, is given and confirmed, and for execution to be had accordingly. I perceive it now resteth in her Majesty’s hands ; for my own part I pray that God may so inspire her heart to take that course as may be for her Majesty’s own safety ; the which I trust her Majesty’s grave wisdom will wisely foresee ; which in my consent cannot be without speedy execution.

“ And thus wishing to your good Lordship as to myself, do bid you right heartily farewell. Your Lordship’s assuredly,

“ SHREWSBURY.

“ Orton Longville, this 17th November, 1586.”

In spite of illness, Shrewsbury could not escape the wretched responsibility of assisting at the tragedy of Fotheringay. There he was forced, on February 8th, 1587, to stand upon the high stage, seven feet square and five feet high, to receive Mary as she mounted it to her death. “ At the two upper corners were two stools

set," runs the record,¹ "one for the Earl of Shrewsbury, another for the Earl of Kent ; directly between the said stools was placed a block one foot high, covered with black, and before that stood a little cushioned stool for the Queen to sit on while her apparel was taken off. . . . Being come into the hall, she stayed and with a smiling countenance asked Shrewsbury why none of her own servants were suffered to be present. He answered that the Queen, his mistress, had so commanded. 'Alas,' quoth she, 'far meaner persons than myself have not been denied so small a favour, and I hope the Queen's Majesty will not deal so hardly with me.' 'Madam,' quoth Shrewsbury, 'it is so appointed to avoid two inconveniences : the one that it is likely your people will shriek and make some fearful noise in the time of your execution, and so both trouble you and us, or else press with some disorder to get of your blood and keep it for a relic, and minister offence that way.' 'My Lord,' she answered, 'I pray you for my better quietness of mind let me have some of my servants about me, and I will give you my word that they shall not offend in any sort.' Upon which promise two of her women and five of her men were sent for, who coming into the hall and seeing the place of execution prepared and their sovereign mistress expecting death, they began to cry out in most woeful and pitiful sort ; wherewith she held up her hand, willing them for her sake to forbear and be silent, 'for,' quoth she, 'I have passed my word to these lords that you shall be quiet and not offend them.' And presently there appeared in them a wonderful show of subjection and loyal obedience as to their natural prince, whom even at the instant of death they honoured

¹ By "A Catholic," State MSS.



Photo by Richard Keene, Ltd., Derby

STATUE OF MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS AT HARDWICK HALL

with all reverence and duty. For though their breasts were seen to rise and swell as if their wounded hearts would have burst in sunder, yet did they, to their double grief, forbear their outward plaints to accomplish her pleasure.

“As soon as she was upon the stage there came to her a heretic called Doctor Fletcher, Dean of Peterborough, and told her how the Queen his sovereign, moved with an unspeakable care of her soul, had sent him to instruct and comfort her in the true words of God. At which she somewhat turned her face towards him, saying, ‘Mr. Doctor, I will have nothing to do with you nor your doctrine’; and forthwith kneeled down before the block and began her meditations in most godly manner. Then the doctor entered also into a form of new-fashioned prayers; but the better to prevent the hearing of him, she raised her voice, and prayed so loud, as he could not be understood. The Earl of Shrewsbury then spoke to her and told her that he would pray with her and for her. ‘My Lord,’ quoth she, ‘if you will pray for me I thank you; but, in so doing, pray secretly by yourself, for we will not pray together.’ Her meditations ended, she arose up and kissed her two gentlewomen, and bowed her body towards her men, and charged them to remember her to her sweet son, to whom she sent her blessing, with promise to pray for him in heaven; and lastly to salute her friends, and so took her last farewell of her poor servants.

“The executioners then began, after their rough and rude manner, to disrobe her, and while they were so doing, she looked upon the noblemen, and smilingly said, ‘Now truly, my Lords, I never had two such grooms waiting on me before!’ Then, being ready

for the block, one of her women took forth a handkerchief of cambric—all wrought over with gold needlework—and tied it about her face ; which done, Fletcher willed her to die in the true faith of Christ. Quoth she : ‘ I believe firmly to be saved by the passion and blood of Jesus Christ, and therein also I believe according to the faith of the Ancient Catholic Church of Rome, and therefore I shed my blood.’ ”

After this the Earl went home, evidently to Sheffield, with time enough to brood once more upon his sickness and his troubles. In 1587 he was certainly at Wingfield with his wife—at least for a brief space—for he wrote to inform Burghley of the fact in obedience to her Majesty’s request. But he was still thoroughly suspicious and distrustful of her attitude. On one occasion, as it seems by the following letter from Nicholas Kynnersley, my Lady had just left Wingfield when my Lord sent his man Gilbert Dickenson to enquire her movements. The letter which puts the magnificent pair in such a pitiful light is relieved by a gracious allusion to little Arabella, left behind at Wingfield, apparently in Kynnersley’s charge :—

“ The night after John was come with my letter Elizabeth told me that Gilbert Dickenson came to her in the [bakehouse] and asked if your Ho. were here ; and she answered ‘ No.’ And he asked when you went away, and she said ‘ Yesterday.’ He asked when you would come again ; she answered ‘ Shortly as she thought.’ And late at night there came a boy from Sheffield in a green coat, and talked with them in the stable, and said he must go very early in the morning to Sheffield again. What the meaning of these questions

and the lackey coming so late and going so early in the morning, I know not, except it be to bring me Lo. words of your absence here, and so that he might come upon you sudden and find you away. So I leave it to your Ho. wisdom to consider of it as you think best; but I think good you were there. Mr. Knifton rode by to-day to Sheffield as I was told, and called not as I . . . told which I marvel of. My La. Arbella at eight of the clock this night was merry, and eats her meat well; but she went not to the school these six days; therefore I would be glad of your La. coming, if there were no other matter but that. So I beseech the Almighty preserve your La. in health, and send you soon a good and comfortable end of all your great troubles and griefs.

“Wingfield, this Tuesday, the 5th of November, at 8 of the clock at night, 1588.

“Your ho. most dutyful bound obedient servant,
“NICHOLAS KINN̄SLAY.

“To the right Ho. my singular good La. and Mistress the Countess of Salop give this with speed.”¹

While this “singular good lady” was still busy trying to induce the Earl to live with her “in house,” he had sundry official business to transact. In 1588 he was hard at work “routing recusants,” egging on the Sheffield Commissioners appointed to that duty, and certifying himself and the Queen of the military efficiency of the counties under his lieutenancy—for the Spanish fleet hovered ever round the English coast. More “seminary priests” did he rout, and used his energy in inducing folk to go to the Established Church,

¹ Hunter's *Hallamshire*

offering his old "lame body" for the Queen's service, since "her quarrel should make him young again." Within a few months of his death he is mentioned in State records as having successfully pounced upon a certain papistical Lady Foljambe and committed her to polite imprisonment in the house of her relative.

This next letter from Gilbert and Mary Talbot to their mother shows entire devotion to her at this difficult period, and is happily free from the old tale-bearing and espionage of previous years :—

"Our bounden duty most humbly remembered. In like humbleness we render your La. thanks for your letter; the last though not the least of your infinite goodnesses towards us and ours. We are safely come hither to Dunstable (we thank God) this Shrove Monday at night; and for that the foul way is past, we think best to return your La. letter again from hence.

"Such news as on the Queen's highways we have met with, your La. shall now understand. First that her Majesty (royally in person) was at the parliament house the first day of this parliament; where Serjeant Snagge was admitted for the Speaker of the lower house. My Lord of Derby is Lord Steward during this session. That yesterday one told a man of mine that as yet nothing of any moment hath been touched in the lower house, neither any expectation that any great matters will be handled, but it will shortly end. That a day or two before the parliament began, the Lord Chancellor and the Lord Treasurer, with one or two more of the privy council, and Mr. Attorney and Mr. Solicitor were with the Earl of Arundel in the Tower; since which time there hath been no such

speech of his arraignment, as there was before. This is all the Queen's highways hath afforded us of news. Yet further we hear that all your Ladyship's . . .¹ are very well. And thus in haste, most humbly beseeching your La. blessing to us and all ours who pray evermore to the most highest to grant unto your La. all contentment with long life, we humbly cease, till our next letter, which shall not be long.

"Your La. most humble and obedient loving children,

"GILB. TALBOTT. MARY TALBOTT.

"We have desired your La. letter men to bring a letter to your La. from Beskewood, where Mrs. Markham's earnest entreaty made us to leave her till the return thereof. I beseech the Almighty to send your La. my La. Arball and the rest of your La.'s a most happy long life.

"To my Lady."

The date of this is 1589. Shrewsbury by this time has lapsed into retirement. He falls finally into old age. Elizabeth's boasting promise that she would give him still greater proof of her trust he would be justified in receiving with a sardonic grunt. Of what use were her favours to him now? She, well into her fifties, could dance, sing, ride, pester her ladies, and flirt with her gentlemen. "The Queen," writes a friend of the Talbotts in 1589, "is so well as I assure you : six or seven gallyards in a morning, besides music and singing, is her ordinary exercise." This is just a year after the death of her adored Leicester, immediately upon his return from his governorship of the Nether-

¹ Blank in the MS.

lands, which he had so hated. The days of his departure for that task were the days of Elizabeth's disfavour. "My Lord," he wrote pathetically to Shrewsbury in 1585, "no man feeleth comfort but they that have cause of griefe, and no men have so much neede of reliefe and comfort as those that go in these doubtful services. I pray you, my Lord, help us to be kept in comfort, for that we wyll hazard our lyfe for it." Shrewsbury and his Countess could echo that cry from the depths of their hearts, for they too were of the company of those "that go in . . . doubtful services."

Thus Leicester, the splendid lover, was dead—of a fever caught on his way home to Kenilworth. Elizabeth still danced, still had zest and appetite for masque and ceremonial. But Shrewsbury and Burghley, after they had written their stately condolences to the Queen, corresponded with one another about health matters. In 1589 the former sends a pathetic old man's gift to his friend of ointment for his joints and "a small rug" to wrap about his legs "at times convenient," while a flask of fine "oyle of roses" was in these days more necessary than ale to the once stalwart Earl Marshal of England.

From time to time Burghley sends to his friend the State news, with suppressed allusions here and there to his illnesses and sorrows. Lady Burghley was dead, and though her husband was able to write in his old dignified fashion of affairs at Court, he avoids all its recreations. "The Queen is at Barn Elms, but this night I will attend her at Westminster, for I am no man meet for feastings," runs a pathetic postscript from him.



*Photo by Richard Keene, Ltd., Derby, from the painting by Zuccherò at Hardwick Hall
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QUEEN ELIZABETH

To Elizabeth, Shrewsbury had played the part which she assigned to one of her lovers, the Duke of Anjou, to whom she wrote apropos of his persistency that she should never cease to love and esteem him as the dog which, being often chastised, returns to its master : “comme le chien qui estant souvent batu retourne a son maitre.” To her lovers she could say such things with impunity, to her servants she only implied them. Her beaten yet steadfast hound, Shrewsbury, true to his family’s emblem of the faithful “Talbot dog,” lay chiefly in these days at his small manor of Handsworth pouring out his soul in letters. There seem to be none available from his wife during his last years, though she was to the end truly anxious to be on happier terms with him, and made every possible effort to achieve this. Once more Elizabeth used her good offices with the honest intent to restore him to happiness. In what was practically the last private letter she ever wrote him, despatched in December, 1589, she addressed him as “her very good old man,” was anxious for news of his health, particularly at this inclement season, sympathised with his gout, and begged him to permit his wife sometimes to have access to him according to her long-cherished wish. He seems to have brooded heavily, as of yore—to a conscience so tender the brooding nature is often a sorry twin brother—and to have discussed the matter without any happy result. About this time he wrote to his intimate friend the Bishop of Lichfield on the subject. The Bishop’s views are set forth in his reply. His view of the married estate is a highly morose one. Yet he begs the Earl, for decency’s sake, to patch up the quarrel finally.

*The Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry to the
Earl of Shrewsbury.*

“ Right honourable, my singular good Lord,

“ I am bold according to my promise, to put you in remembrance of some matters already passed between us in talk. It is an old saying, and as true as old, a thing well begun is half ended. It pleased your good Lordship, at my late being with you, to confer with me about divers points touching the good estate of this our shire, whereof yourself, next under her Majesty, is the chief governor; and I hope, as you then begun them in good time, so very shortly they will be brought to very good perfection. . . . Thus much for those common affairs we had in conference; now the chief and last matter that we talked of, and a matter indeed both in conscience chiefly to be regarded of you, and in duty still to be urged and called upon by me, was the good and godly reconciliation of you together, I mean my Lordship and my Lady your wife. I humbly thank your good Lordship you were content then to take my motion in good part, and to account it for a good piece of mine office and charge to travel in such cases, as indeed it is, and therefore, I trust you will be as willing now to see me write as you were then to hear me speak in that matter; and the more, because I speak and write as well of mere love and goodwill to yourself, as for any respect also of discharging my duty unto God; and yet, also, you must think chiefly and principally that I speak and write to discharge my duty to God, and must take all that I do to proceed, not as from a common friend and hanger-on, but as from a special ghostly father, stirred up of God

purposely, as I hope, to do good unto you both by my ghostly advice. My honourable good Lord, I cannot see but that it must needs rest as a great clog to your conscience, if you consider the matter as it is, and will weigh the case according to the rule of God's word : I say I cannot see but that it must needs rest and remain a great clog and burthen to your conscience to live asunder from the Countess your wife, without her own good liking and consent thereto ; for, as I have told you heretofore, it is the plain doctrine of Saint Paul that the one should not defraud the other of due benevolence nor of mutual comfort and company, but with the agreement of both parties, and that also but for a time, and only to give yourselves to fasting and prayer. This is the doctrine of Saint Paul, and this doctrine Christ Himself confirmed in the Gospel when He forbiddeth all men to put away their wives unless for adultery, a thing never suspected in my Lady your wife. I could bring forth many authorities and examples both of the Holy Scriptures and other, profane writers, to prove that such kind of separations have always been holden unlawful and ungodly, not only among the people of God, but also among the heathen themselves that never knew God ; and I could likewise show what fearful judgments of God have followed such unlawful separations, and what great plagues have fallen upon not only the offenders themselves, but also upon their houses and children, and all their posterity after them ; but I shall not need to use any such discourse to your Lordship, because so wise, so grave, so well disposed as indeed you are of yourself if other evil counsellors did not draw you to the contrary ; who also shall not want their part in the play, for, as the proverb saith, so

experience proveth the same to be true, *consilium malum consultori pessimum*, evil counsel falleth out worst to the counsel giver.

“But some will say in your Lordship’s behalf that the Countess is a sharp and bitter shrew, and therefore like enough to shorten your life if she should keep you company. Indeed, my good Lord, I have heard some say so, but if shrewdness or sharpness may be a just cause of separation between a man and wife, I think few men in England would keep their wives long ; for it is a common jest, yet true in some sense, that there is but one shrew in all the world and every man hath her ; and so every man might be rid of his wife that would be rid of a shrew. My honourable good Lord, I doubt not but your great wisdom and experience hath taught you to bear some time with the woman as with the weaker vessel ; and yet, for the speeches I have had with her Ladyship in that behalf, I durst pawn all my credit unto your Lordship (and, if need be, also bind myself in any great bond), she will so bridle herself that way, beyond the course of other women, that she will rather bear with your Lordship, than look to be borne withal ; and yet to be borne withal sometimes is not amiss for the best and wisest and patientest of us all. But peradventure some of your friends will object greater matter against her ; as that she hath sought to overthrow your whole house ; but those that say so I think are not your Lordship’s friends, but rather her Ladyship’s enemies, and their speech carrieth no resemblance of truth ; for how can it be likely that she should seek or wish the overthrow of you or your house, when not only, being your wife, your prosperity must needs profit her very much, but also, having

joined her house with your house in marriage, your long life and honourable state must needs glad her heart to the uttermost ; if not for your own sake, yet for the issue of both your bodies, whom she loveth, I dare say, as her own life, and would not see by her goodwill to fall into any decay, either of honour or any other good state of life or livings ; although, also, I dare say she wisheth all good unto you for your own sake, as well as theirs, or else she would not be so desirous of your life and company as she is. And therefore, I beseech your Lordship remove all such conceits far from you as are beaten into your head by evil counsellors, and rather think this unlawful separation to be a stain to your house, and a danger to your life ; for that God, indeed, is not well pleased with it, Who will visit with death or sickness all that live not after His laws, as of late yourself had some little touch or taste given you of it by those or the nearest friends of those whom you most trusted about you. For my own part, I wish your Lordship all good, even from my heart ; both long life and honourable state, with all increase of honour, and joy and comfort in the Lord to your own heart's desire ; but yet both I and you, and all of us that are God's children, must think that such visitations are sent us of God to call us home, and if we despise them when they are sent, He will lay greater upon us. Thus I am bold, my good Lord, both in the fear of God and in goodwill towards yourself, to discharge the duty of your well-willing ghostly father, and if your Lordship accept it well, as I hope you will, I beseech you let me understand it by a line or two, that I may give God thanks for it ; if not, I have done my part ; the success I leave to God ;

and rest yours, notwithstanding, in what I may, and so I humbly take my leave of your good Lordship.

“From Eccleshall, the 12th of October, 1590.

“Your Lordship’s in all duty to command,

“W. COVEN. AND LICH.”

It is not necessary to lay stress on the sheer fatuity and unwisdom of three-fourths of such a letter. But the gross injustice of it has never been fully appreciated by historians. In the first place, Bess of Hardwick was not a mere shrew—as has been amply set forth. She was a woman of great capabilities, and superabundant driving power which, insufficiently controlled, ended in a blindness to any point of view but her own, and so caused her to utter under provocation, stress, and disappointment hard and foolish things which the Earl could not forget. The estrangement had certainly gone too far for peace. The time for such things as a renewal of trust and love between the two was past. Within a month or two—in the January of 1591—the Earl died. Gossip—wise after the event—declared that with his last breath he groaned over the possibilities of disaster which would descend upon his family through his wife’s schemes for Arabella.

In the previous year the great Walsingham, worn out by stress of affairs and labour, succumbed also—to his “tympany and carnosity.”

And, since the world and his wife must be amused, and the Queen needed distraction from heavy cares of State, she went forth to be entertained at a public fête a day after the death of her much-enduring “good old man.”

To the last he could not forget the great slander.

Even his tomb witnesses, in his own words, to his virtue. He must have brooded carefully over this epitaph and the memorial which bears it in Sheffield Church. All allusion to his second wife is omitted, and in regard to the scandal he urges the fact of his official presence at the execution of Mary as the surest proof of the innocence of his relations with her. All he asked of his posterity was that upon his death the date should be added to the tomb. This they omitted to do.

CHAPTER XXI

HEIR AND DOWAGER

A FAMILY circle made up of ingredients so pugnacious could scarcely be expected to act unanimously when it came to a question of the division of property after the Earl's death. Instantly the fragments in the Talbot kaleidoscope rearranged themselves. It was my Lady who now fought practically single-handed, and the new Earl, Gilbert, and her own child Mary were against her. They fought, as usual, in letters, and confided largely in their friends. Gilbert and Mary in one of their previous letters had called upon the Almighty "speedily to grant your Ladyship all contentment with long life." When this new family feud began they must have regretted that wish. Had they foreseen that they had to encounter her strong will and keen business instinct for the space of another seventeen years they might possibly have compromised matters more quickly. The fact is Gilbert and Mary were innately pugnacious. It is written in their faces as they look down from the walls of the great picture-gallery of Hardwick. Neither face is unrefined, both are shrewd, and Mary's, at any rate, has, added to a touch of scorn, a certain humorous sparkle. Neither, however, possesses the dignity of the parents. Mary has not her mother's good features and innately aristo-

cratic air. Gilbert lacks the breadth and steadiness expressed by the Earl.

Gilbert had taken his place now as seventh Earl, received the usual pompous letters of condolence from Lord Burghley and others, and was duly admitted to the order of the Garter. His notions of earldom expressed themselves chiefly in a gorgeous style of living which (in Hunter's opinion) "alone earned for him the title of the great and glorious Earl of Shrewsbury," irrespective of either intellectual or official distinction. Naturally his wife with her "pomp and court-like ways" was in full accord with him, and the renewal of the "All-for-Money" family fray was inevitable. In addition to his strife with the old Countess, he fought with Henry Talbot his younger brother, with Lady Talbot the widow of his elder brother Francis, with his own mother's people the Manners family, with a prominent neighbour Sir Richard Wortley of Wortley, and, as aforesaid, with the Stanhopes of Nottinghamshire, to whom his wife despatched the violent message of hatred quoted in a previous chapter. It stands to reason also that he could not live at peace with his tenantry. As an ordinary man he does not seem to have been mentally vigorous enough, as a man of the world not sufficiently master of his hates and prejudices to come to an understanding with them. It was, after all, the most difficult task of his Lordship, and one for which his Court and town experiences had not fitted him in the least. Most pitiful of all was his deadly feud with his brother Edward. As Gilbert's letters show, this arose entirely out of the dissensions over property, though Edward and Henry, appointed as executors of their father's will, were wise enough to

decline the task and allow it to devolve on to the experienced shoulders of their splendid stepmother.

This feud between Edward and Gilbert flourished wickedly. There is no need to bore the reader with the insertion of the pages of truculent correspondence which ensued. Gilbert eventually challenged the other to a duel, and Edward firmly declined to fight his own flesh and blood. From the ancient chivalric standpoint this may look like a lack of virility. But to fight would have been the height of unwisdom for two young, well-born men, fathers of families, and in circumstances that would have been wholly prosperous except for their absurd expenditure. It is this very refusal of Edward Talbot which causes one to discount the current story—set forth with the support of arguments, probabilities, and reasons in the Harleian MSS.—to the intent that Edward conspired, in Medici fashion, with Gilbert's own physician, Dr. Wood, against Gilbert's life, the medium chosen for the murder being a subtly poisoned pair of perfumed gloves.

Thus it was as well for the whole family that my Lady came to the fore again and wrestled with Gilbert, for he had flattery enough from some of his friends to feed his vanity in his new position. The garrulous Richard Topcliffe covered several pages in a letter expressing gladness that it had pleased God to set the heir in the seat of his noble ancestors. "At such an alteration of a house as now hath chanced by your father's death, there is ever great expecting towards the rising of the sun." It is an absurd, toadying letter, of which the only sincere part is the writer's definition of it at the close as "my tedious dream." Of such letters Gilbert received his share, like his father, and was

flooded with all sorts of other correspondence—official, semi-official, and private. He assumes his father's office in the lieutenancy of three counties, issues his orders for armament. He meant excellently well no doubt, but was not in the worldly sense a success. He could never, like his father, have borne the Queen's heavy burdens from sheer devotion to a patriotic ideal and from horror of incurring her disfavour. His disputes with his tenantry so overpowered him that he was forced to refer the matter to the Queen. Her opinion was against him and on the side of the tenants. Meanwhile the Stanhope quarrel became a regular county affair, and, as Hunter puts it, "was pursued by both parties with such precipitation and violence that it was rendered impossible for the neighbouring gentry to preserve neutrality." It is not surprising that five years after his father's death he was thoroughly out of favour. Yet Elizabeth could be very kind to his children. One of her gentleman ushers, his friend, Richard Brakenbury, writing from Court, sent him in a letter to Rufford a pretty picture of the way she fondled his little girl:—

"If I should write how much her Majesty this day did make of the little lady your daughter, with often kissing (which her Majesty seldom useth to any) and then amending her dressing with pins, and still carrying her with her Majesty in her own barge, and so into the Privy Council lodgings, and so homeward from the running, you would scarce believe me. Her Majesty said (as true it is) that she is very like my Lady her grandmother. She behaved herself with such modesty as I pray God she may possess at twenty years old."

Indirectly the magnificent Dowager could only be gratified by such favours. Her main energies now were given to "pushing" Arabella in the great world. Incidentally also it was her affair to go on building, building, that she might live and flourish. Constructive imagination of a certain kind she undoubtedly had. She loved grandeur, comfort, and domestic beauty, and could conceive and plan their achievement. She was led to her building by her sense of importance, coupled with the praiseworthy desire to establish her offspring in a fine house, and so increase their social advantages. That was the beginning, and her practical imagination aided her. But rumour says that it is not by the golden light of imagination that she was helped to expand and continue her enterprises, but by the glare of morbid superstition. Some soothsayer she met—history does not say at what period of her life—told her that so long as she went on building she would never die. All hard-headed as she was she has not escaped the imputation of credence in fortune-telling, for she went on building to the end. Moreover, there is the more excuse for her superstition, since, as we know, crystal-gazers and conjurers with their charmed plates of gold, their phials and symbols, came and went in the country and about the English and foreign courts. It is more than possible that such persons, though included in Shrewsbury's roll of "practicers" and suspects, occasionally found their way into my Lady's parlour in Chatsworth or Hardwick. There is behind this old soothsayer's story a deeper meaning. She built that she might exist, but in her building she truly lived, for in her strongly constructive instinct all her higher faculties, in their

finest, their Aristotelian sense, found their outlet, while her heart realised a certain happiness.

By this time she was just seventy, and still in full vigour, though tolerably scarred and embittered in heart and soul. Through Arabella and her second son William, both of whom she really seems to have adored, she had still a great hold upon life. It was her main business now to fight old age, face her fourth widowhood resolutely, live in comfort, and provide for those she loved or who were in any sense dependent on her.

Arabella cannot, of course, have had a particularly joyous or smooth childhood under the sway of that keen, tempestuous temperament, but at any rate she imbibed and inherited an enormous amount of vitality. She was too young to be overcast by the pitiful, short-lived love story of her parents, and her grandmother brought her up jealously and in an atmosphere of state which helped to single her out from the other grandchildren of the family and from the family circle. A letter from the Countess, written when Arabella was but a baby, may be included here :—

“The Countess of Shrewsbury to Lord Burghley, respecting the assignment of an Income to the Lady Arabella. A.D. 1582.¹

“After my very hearty commendations to your good Lo. where it pleased the Queen’s Majesty my most gracious Sovereign, upon my humble suit to grant unto my late daughter Lennox four hundred pounds, and to that her dear and only daughter Arbella two hundred

¹ Ellis’s *Letters*

pounds yearly for their better maintenance, assigned out of part of the land of her inheritance: whereof the four hundred pounds is now at her Majesty's disposition by the death of my daughter Lennox, whom it pleased God (I doubt not in mercy for her good, but to my no small grief, in her best time) to take out of this world, whom I cannot yet remember but with a sorrowful troubled mind. I am now, my good L., to be an humble suitor to the Queen's Majesty that it may please her to confirm that grant of the whole six hundred pounds yearly for the education of my dearest jewel Arbella, wherein I assuredly trust to her Majesty's most gracious goodness, who never denied me any suit, but by her most bountiful and gracious favours every way hath so much bound me as I can never think myself able to discharge my duty in all faithful service to her Majesty. I wish not to leave after I shall willingly fail in any part thereof to the best of my power. And as I know your L. hath special care for the ordering of her Majesty's revenues and of her estate every way, so trust I you will consider of the poor infant's case, who under her Majesty is to appeal only unto your Lo. for succour in all her distresses; who, I trust, cannot dislike of this my suit on her behalf, considering the charges incident to her bringing up. For although she were ever where her mother was during her life, yet can I not now like she should be here nor in any place else where I may not sometimes see her and daily hear of her, and therefore charged with keeping house where she must be with such as is fit for her standing, of whom I have special care, not only such as a natural mother hath of her best beloved child, but much more greater in respect how she is in



*From a photo by Richard Keene, Ltd., Derby, after the painting at Hardwick Hall
By permission of his Grace the Duke of Devonshire*

ARABELLA STUART

blood to her Majesty : albeit one of the poorest as depending wholly on her Majesty's gracious bounty and goodness, and being now upon seven years, and very apt to learn, and able to conceive what shall be taught her. The charge will so increase as I doubt not her Majesty will well conceive the six hundred pounds yearly to be little enough, which as your Lo. knoweth is but so much in money, for that the lands be in lease, and no further commodity to be looked for during these few years of the child's minority. All which I trust your L. will consider and say to her Majesty what you think thereof ; and so most heartily wish your L. well to do.

“Sheffield this 6th day of May.

“Your L. most assured loving friend,

“E. SHREWSBURY.

“To the right honourable and my very good Lord the Lord Burghley, L. Treasurer of England.”

To this Arabella, aged seven, adds her pretty French postscript :—

“Je prieray Dieu Monsr. vous donner en parfaite en entiere santé, tout heureux et bon succes, et seray tousjours preste a vous faire tout honneur et service.

“ARBELLA STEWARD.”

The new Hardwick, the present hall, was not actually finished till seven years after the Earl's death, and there and at the older house the Dowager and the semi-royal grandchild spent many years together. The former was, as has been instanced, busy betimes with making matches for the child. After the disappointment about

Lord Leicester's little son, the old ambitious spirit flares up gloriously in the proposal that Arabella, who was just ten years old, should marry James of Scotland. She was suggested by Walsingham, presumably at the Queen's desire, as an alternative bride to a Danish princess. James was not inclined to make up his mind at the moment, and in the following year another bridegroom was suggested—Rainutio, son of the Duke of Parma. Since the Duke was suspected of laying claim to the English throne, these negotiations were carried on secretly, not so secretly, however, that they escaped the knowledge of Burghley. State papers show that he was well aware that a servant of Sir Edward Stafford was employed "from beyond the sea, to practise with" Arabella about this marriage. "He was sent once before for her picture, and has been thrice to England this year," is the conclusion of the secret information sent to Court. It is likely that the picture named might be a copy of one of the two hanging now in the great gallery at Hardwick Hall. Both are deeply interesting, and one, in which she is shown as a little, dignified, grandly dressed child of two holding a gay stiff doll, is very moving. The other, of which the original seems to be at Welbeck, shows her "in her hair," in the old phrase. Part of her hair is drawn over a puff above her forehead and adorned with a drop jewel, and the rest hangs down fine and straight like a soft veil behind her shoulders. Her dress is white, with sleeves either of ermine or white velvet with black spots; her gold fan has a dull red cord, and a girdle of jewels is about her waist. On either side of her hangs a portrait of James VI as a little boy. In one he carries a hawk—symbol of the passion for sport which



*Photo by Richard Keene, Ltd., Derby, from the picture at Hardwick Hall
By permission of his Grace the Duke of Devonshire*

ARABELLA STUART

seems to have been, save for his obstinacy, his only strong point ; in the other he is in correct fashionable dress and plumed cap, and wears a tiny sword—symbol of the courage he never possessed, and forerunner of the full-grown weapon which he could carry with swagger, but dared not use on his mother's behalf. Even as his little presence hedges Arabella in this gallery on both sides, so in life his position dominated hers most cruelly in years to come.

The proposed marriage alluded to, which set abroad all manner of fears of conspiracy in connection with Arabella in 1592, caused Lord Burghley to write warnings to the Countess. All the old caution and authority show in her reply :—

*The Countess of Shrewsbury to Lord Burghley: representing her care of the Lady Arabella.*¹

“My honourable good Lord,—I received your Lordship's letter on Wednesday towards night, being the 20th of this September, by a servant of Mr. John Talbott, of Ireland. My good Lord, I was at the first much troubled to think that so wicked and mischievous practices should be devised to entrap my poor Arbell and me, but I put my trust in the Almighty, and will use such diligent care as I doubt not but to prevent whatsoever shall be attempted by any wicked persons against the poor child. I am most bound to her Majesty that it pleased her to appoint your Lordship to give me knowledge of this wicked practice, and I humbly thank your Lordship for advertising it : if any such like hereinafter be discovered I pray your Lordship

¹ Ellis's *Letters*.

I may be forewarned. I will not have any unknown or suspected person to come to my house. Upon the least suspicion that may happen here, anyway, I shall give advertisement to your Lordship. I have little resort to me : my house is furnished with sufficient company : Arbell walks not late, at such time as she shall take the air, it shall be near the house, and well attended on : she goeth not to anybody's house at all : I see her almost every hour in the day : she lieth in my bed-chamber. If I can be more precise than I have been I will be. I am bound in nature to be careful for Arbell : I find her loving and dutiful to me, yet her own good and safety is not dearer to me, nor more by me regarded than to accomplish her Majesty's pleasure, and that which I think may be for her service. I would rather wish many deaths than to see this or any such like wicked attempt to prevail.

"About a year since, there was one Harrison, a seminary, that lay at his brother's house about a mile from Hardwick, whom I thought then to have caused to be apprehended, and to have sent him up ; but found he had licence for a time. Notwithstanding, the seminary, soon after, went from his brother's, finding how much I was discontented with his lying so near me. Since my coming now into the country, I had some intelligence that the same seminary was come again to his brother's house : my son William Cavendish went thither of a sudden to make search for him, but could not find him. I write this much to your Lordship that if any such traitorous and naughty persons (through her Majesty's clemency) be suffered to go abroad, that they may not harbour near my houses Wingfield, Hardwick, or Chatsworth in Derby-

shire : they are the most likely instruments to put a bad matter in execution.

“One Morley, who hath attended on Arbell, and read to her for the space of three years and a half, showed to be much discontented since my return into the country, in saying he had lived in hope to have some annuity granted him by Arbell out of her lands during his life, or some lease of grounds to the value of forty pounds a year, alleging that he was so much damaged by leaving the University, and now saw that if she were willing, yet not of ability, to make him any such assurance. I understanding by divers that Morley was so much discontented, and withal of late having some cause to be doubtful of his forwardness in religion (though I cannot charge him with papistry), took occasion to part with him. After he was gone from my house, and all his stuff carried from hence, the next day he returned again, very importunate to serve without standing upon any recompense, which made me more suspicious, and the more willing to part with him. I have no other in my house who will supply Morley’s place very well for the time. I will have those that shall be sufficient in learning, honest, and well disposed so near as I can.

“I am forced to use the hand of my son William Cavendish, not being able to write so much myself for fear of bringing great pain to my head. He only is privy to your Lordship’s letter, and neither Arbell nor any other living, nor shall be.

“I beseech your Lordship I may be directed from you as occasion shall fall out. To the uttermost of my understanding, I have and will be careful. I beseech the Almighty to send your Lordship a long and

happy life, and so I will commit your Lordship to His protection. From my house at Hardwick the 21st of September, 1592.

“Your Lordship’s as I am bound,

“E. SHREWSBURY.”



Photo by Richard Keene, Ltd., Derby

THE PICTURE GALLERY FROM THE NORTH, HARDWICK HALL

CHAPTER XXII

ARABELLA DANCES INTO COURT

THE death of Mary Queen of Scots was the signal for the Countess to insure that Arabella should be as near the Court as possible. She was kept hard at her lessons, but, though the various members of the family were at variance over property, the Dowager was far too wise to spoil the girl's prospects by forbidding her intercourse with her "Court-like" aunt, Gilbert's Mary. As regards the young Shrewsbury pair she was, of course, at once a possible stumbling-block and a possible stepping-stone to their advantage. Her parentage gave her social precedence, and though her present worldly status was not very great, she might at any time, by an important marriage, assume a position far above them and be regarded as a source of Court favours. In fact, both sides of the complicated family co-operated to help her on in the world.

Already at the age of thirteen she was introduced to the Court. Her young uncle, Sir Charles Cavendish, writes of it with great appreciation : " My Lady Arbell, has been once to Court. Her Majesty spoke twice to her . . . she dined in the presence, but my Lord Treasurer had her to supper ; and at dinner, I dining with her, and sitting over against him, he asked me whether I came with my niece. I said I came with her : then he spake openly, and directed his speech to Sir

Walter Rawley, greatly in her recommendation, as that she had the French, the Italian, played of instruments, dances, and writ very fair ; wished she were fifteen years old, and with that rounded Mr. Rawley in the ear, who answered it would be a happy thing. . . . My Lady Arbelle and the rest are very well, and it is wonderful how she profiteth in her book, and believe she will dance with exceeding good grace, and can behave herself with great proportion to everyone in their degree.”¹

Old Lady Shrewsbury worked hard for Arabella and played for Elizabeth’s favour now more than ever, with a keen hope of seeing the girl named as her Majesty’s successor. James of Scotland was, of course, playing a similar game, and while he pressed the Queen in regard to the succession, up to the point of making her angry, he kept on good terms with Arabella, to whom he wrote now and then an affectionate, cousinly letter. His tactics were practical, for he now proposed as her bridegroom Esmé Stuart, a piece of diplomacy on which, under the magnificent guise of her restoration to her own title of Lennox, he must have prided himself enormously. This offer was declined ; a short-sighted refusal, as it proved both in the future and in the present, for matters in regard to Elizabeth’s favour did not prosper. Old age and bitterness made her resentful and increased her hydra-headed suspicion. It was always so easy for any ill-minded person to raise a papistical scare and accuse Arabella—whose aunt, the young Countess, was notoriously in favour of the proscribed priesthood—as being the heart and soul of every such plot.

Yet the Dowager Countess still laboured on. We

¹ Costello.

find Arabella sending the Queen a "rare New Year gift," to which her Majesty's return was acknowledged by a confidential correspondent as a very poor one. The Queen, however, in discussion with the writer announced her intention to be kind and promised to be "very careful of Arabella." Again this was a case of "Words, words!"

It was in 1592 that Arabella refused Esmé Stuart. In 1596 no less a person than the French King discussed her as a possible bride for the Dauphin. Meanwhile she, who was in no sense an *intrigante*, and seems to have inherited all the simplicity of her mother, with the energy and the *joie de vivre* of her grandmother, was in no way concerned in the wretched schemes attributed to her by wild gossip. She was more desirous of love and companionship than of place and glory, and of a decent competence than the splendour of courts. In her twenty-eighth year (1603) she attempted to make her own choice. It was a curious one as regards discrepancy in age. She sought to betroth herself to a boy fifteen years old, young William Seymour. This was no less than the grandson of that same unhappy Earl Hertford who had wedded poor Lady Catherine Grey. The whole affair would be puzzling if it were not for the fact that Arabella's thoughts were turned in this direction by the fact that he, like herself, was partly of royal blood. At the same time, he was not hampered by the possession of a crown, and with all the attendant difficulties and dangers of a royal marriage. The matter did not go very far, for the bare suggestion of such a thing aroused the most absurd excitement in the Queen's mind. Arabella was at once arrested.

Elizabeth, it will be remembered, was already dying

by inches in the cold spring of 1603. The accusation that Arabella's action killed her has no ground whatsoever; but it was an unfortunate moment to incur royal displeasure. Naturally when the question of succession came up finally and Elizabeth was asked if she could contemplate young William Seymour's father, Lord Beauchamp, as her heir, the old irritation against the Hertford marriage flared up in that memorable dying retort of hers: "I will have no rascal's son in my place."

Bitterly indeed must Bess Shrewsbury have raved at Hardwick against the unjust fate which caused the fortunes of her "juwell" to decline so miserably at this critical moment. The succession of James was thereby assured, and when it became fact was a bitter pill for Talbot and Cavendish to swallow. By this time the good Burghley was dead, and his son, Sir Robert Cecil, undertook to mediate for Arabella with James. She was for the moment removed to polite imprisonment in the country, whence she wrote breezy and innocent letters to her family, notably to her step-uncle, Edward Talbot, in which she disclaims her guilt in a somewhat veiled and fantastic manner. "Noble gentleman," runs one sentence, "I am as unjustly accused of contriving a comedy as you in my conscience a tragedy."

While she awaited the King's pleasure James was making his first royal progress, and Gilbert Shrewsbury had the honour of entertaining him magnificently at Worksop Manor, which must have made the Dowager fearfully jealous. Cecil set to work as soon as possible on his protégée's behalf, and, seeing that she presented no problem of political danger, eventually procured her liberty—that is, with certain reservations. He under-



From an engraving by Walker, after a drawing by Malton

WELBECK ABBEY

took that she should reside with the Marchioness of Northampton at Sheen.

All this while the Countess Dowager kept well in the background. Arabella, she knew, was of an age to manage her own affairs, and could deal shrewdly and promptly with Cecil in regard to her maintenance by the King in her right as one of royal blood. She managed this difficult situation so well that she was presently taken into the bosom of the Court. This happy event was gracefully achieved thus. The arrival in England of the Queen-Consort some months after her husband was the cause for further display on the part of both Cavendishes and Talbots. Bess Shrewsbury planned a great reception for Anne of Denmark at Chatsworth, and tendered the invitation through Arabella. It was declined, and it has been suggested that the royal motive for this was the unhappy association of the great hostess with the mother of James. Though the mere fact of the Countess's former position of assistant-gaoler may not have sufficed, memories of strife and "scandilation" would certainly stick in the memory of those who surrounded James, and their advice could scarcely favour the invitation. Arabella was, however, authorised to go to Welbeck to assist her uncle, Sir Charles Cavendish, to receive Anne. At the same time she was to be introduced to the young Princess, to whom she was appointed State governess. Earl Gilbert's house was once more honoured, and his wife and he incited to impoverish themselves anew for their second magnificent royal entertainment in the year of the accession.

At Welbeck Sir Charles Cavendish vied with his half-brother and contrived an elaborate sylvan pageant

in which Arabella figured as Diana. Poor Diana ! At twenty-seven she could personate with zest the chaste, invincible, tireless goddess. Could she have foreseen that rôle assigned to her for life by the criminal selfishness of James, she would have forsworn all courts in that hour, and preferred the groves in which she and William Seymour would willingly have walked in years to come, hand in hand, poor and happy.

So—as in Elizabeth's day—the girl, spirited, cultured, good, and warm-hearted, danced herself into the heart of Queen Anne, and above all into that of the young Elizabeth, whom she charmed instantly. Away went Arabella now to Court in the new Queen's train, and thenceforward appeared constantly in the company of her clever, tart, intriguing Shrewsbury aunt. Her uncle Gilbert kept a steady eye on her. For she was lively, brilliant ; not beautiful, but of great magnetic attraction. Withal, she was quick of tongue, and he feared lest she should slip into indiscretion of speech and give advantage to back-biters at Court.

She escaped at least one danger this autumn—infection from the plague. In spite of all her duties and dangers she was in close touch with her relatives. Naturally there were difficult moments. Now she displeases her tremendous grandmother, and now her pugnacious aunt. Again and again she tries to act as go-between, and at odd times secures favours for one or the other—a barony for William Cavendish, a bride for his son. At intervals she visited her grandmother, but generally with a view to making peace between Gilbert and the hostess of Hardwick. To him she wrote in a very touching manner after a visit to the old lady : “ I found so good hope of my grand-



Photo by Richard Keene, Ltd., Derby

THE DINING-ROOM, HARDWICK HALL

mother's good inclination to a good and reasonable reconciliation betwixt herself and her divided family that I could not forbear to impart to your Lordship with all speed. Therefore I beseech you, put on such a Christian and honourable mind as becometh you to bear to a lady so near to you and yours as my grandmother is. And think you cannot devise to do me greater honour and contentment than to let me be the only mediator, moderator, and peacemaker betwixt you and her. You know I have cause only to be partial on your side, so many kindnesses and favours I have received from you, and so many unkindnesses and disgraces have I received from the other party. Yet will I not be restrained from chiding you (as great a lord as you are) if I find you either not willing to be asked to this good notion or to proceed in it as I shall think reasonably. . . . If I be not sufficient for this treaty never think me such as can add strength and honour to your family."

Such matters were hard for both sides, and one's sympathy inclines to the ageing, fighting, building Dowager. "Your unkindness sticks sore in her teeth," wrote one of Gilbert's informants. To Gilbert, however, she managed to maintain a proud front, and busied herself about a fresh building enterprise.

This project was partly the outcome of her extraordinary pugnacity. Her neighbour, Sir Francis Leake, had designed and was building in the county a fine house, Sutton, which rivalled Hardwick in magnificence. Invidious comparisons were evidently drawn, and she declared scornfully that she would build as good a house "for owls" as he for men. The mansion she built was therefore called Owlcotes, and was not far from Hardwick.

The first year of Arabella's royal post was certainly one fraught with peril, for it closed with the trial of Sir Walter Raleigh, accused, as all will remember, of plotting to dethrone James in favour of Arabella. Even Henry Cavendish was suspected of complicity. It is not necessary here to go into the details which proved Arabella's innocence. It was quickly proved and her Court life went on as before, gaily, with masques, drawing-rooms, ballets, and even the nursery games in which it pleased the ladies of the Danish Anne to indulge.

At the close of her second year at Court (1605) another proposal, this time from the King of Poland, reached Arabella and was refused. She does not yet seem to have tired of the frivolous and exhausting life, though her letters—whimsical, affectionate, quaintly sententious, often highly graphic—are shortened at times, and, though loyal, she complains roundly of "this everlasting hunting." For in their passion for sport King and Queen dragged their courtiers hither and thither, and the latter were often miserably housed and served during these expeditions.

The Dowager at Hardwick was well informed of Court affairs, for she paid a handsome retaining fee to no less a person than the Dean of the Chapel Royal in order that he should keep her well posted. In this year (1605) she was taken seriously ill and summoned Arabella. The girl was evidently afraid of her, for she took precautions to insure welcome in the shape of a letter from the King himself, desiring the Countess to receive her granddaughter with kindness and bounty. This incensed the old lady a good deal. Though she was now more or less like a sleeping dragon guarding



*From a photo by Richard Keene, Ltd., Derby, after the painting at Hardwick Hall
By permission of his Grace the Duke of Devonshire*

JAMES THE FIFTH OF SCOTLAND

her hoard, as in the Norse legend, she could still rouse herself to snarl in a letter. She did not write to the King direct, but devised an epistle to the Dean, in which she emphatically declared her astonishment at the royal message. This he was ordered to show to the King. "It was very strange to her," she said, "that my Lady Arabella should come to her with a recommendation as either doubting of her entertainment or desiring to come to her from whom she had desired so earnestly to come away. That for her part she thought she had sufficiently expressed her good meaning and kindness to her that had purchased her seven hundred pounds by year land of inheritance, and given her as much money as would buy a hundred pound by year more. And though for her part she had done very well for her according to her poor ability, yet she should always be welcome to her, though she had divers grandchildren that stood more in need than she, and much the more welcome in respect of the King's recommendation; she had bestowed on Arabella a cup of gold worth a hundred pound, and three hundred pound in money which deserved thankfulness very well, considering her poor ability."

James could afford to laugh at such a communication, which fortunately did not prejudice Arabella in his eyes. Her return to Court was not long delayed, for her grandmother recovered, and the Court lady was once more free to stand godmother to royal babies, play, hunt, and dance, and suffer perpetual financial embarrassment owing to the ridiculous expenditure to which courtiers of both sexes were put in making royal gifts and providing the costly, fantastic costumes which the successive masques entailed.

It was during the production of the famous "Masque of Beauty," written for *Twelfth Night*, and produced in honour of the visit of the King of Denmark, that Bess Shrewsbury sank into her last illness. For this masque Arabella, it is recorded, appeared in jewels and robes worth more than £100,000. From such scenes of colour and luxuriance she was called to that stately, lonely deathbed at Hardwick.

Of the Countess's danger her relatives were fully aware, and the various family partisans took good care to be on the look-out for any hostile movements with regard to property from their opponents. The following extract from one of Gilbert's letters to Henry Cavendish gives an ugly little picture of the situation. The date is January 4th, 1607 :—

"When I was at Hardwick she did eat very little, and not able to walk the length of the chamber betwixt two, but grew so ill at it as you might plainly discern it. On New Year's Eve, when my wife sent her New Year's gift, the messenger told us she looked pretty well and spoke heartily ; but my Lady wrote that she was worse than when we last saw her, and Mrs. Digby sent a secret message that her Ladyship was so ill that she could not be from her day nor night. I heard that direction is given to some at Wortley to be in readiness to drive away all the sheep and cattle at Ewden instantly upon her Ladyship's death.

"These being the reasons that move me thus to advise you, consider how like it is that when she is thought to be in danger your good brother will think it time to work with you to that effect, and—God forgive me if I judge amiss—I verily think that, till of late, he



Photo by Richard Keene, Ltd., Derby

TOMB OF ELIZABETH COUNTESS OF SHREWSBURY

hath been in some hope to have seen your end before hers, by reason of your sickliness and discontentment of mind. To conclude, I wish and advise you to take no hold of any offer that shall be made unto you, etc.

“You have not been forgot to my Lady, neither for yourself nor for Chatsworth, but we have forborne to write you thereof, knowing that one of your brother’s principallest means to keep us all so divided one from another, etc.”

“Your good brother” is certainly William Cavendish, of whom the whole family were wildly jealous, and who planned to seize certain cattle belonging to the Countess, in advance of his brothers, so soon as she had drawn her last breath.

Very few details are extant of the death of the great Bess. Grateful pensioners she had, and certainly some devoted servants. Her intimate friends were few, and nearly all her contemporaries predeceased her. We come across nothing more interesting as a bare record of her death than the following entry in Simpson’s *National Records of Derby* for 1607:—

“The old Countess of Shrewsbury died about Candlemas this year, whose funeral was about Holy Thursday. A great frost this year. The witches of Bakewell hanged.”

So into limbo this contemptuous entry dismisses a great lady. Pouf! Out with the candles! The frost is over; some women have been hung at Bakewell; an old lady is dead.

To the end she never ceased her doughty and defiant game with stone, wood, and mortar. While her “home

for owls" was in erection there came that same "great frost" named in the old Derby chronicle. Naturally the mortar at "Owlcotes" froze. The masons could do nothing. Instantly she issued orders that it was to be thawed with boiling water. This was unavailing, and the order came to use ale also, in the hope that the thicker fluid might prevent crystallisation. About this there is the true Elizabethan touch. But even ale, poured out like water, failed, and my Lady went out—with the holy candles.

How Arabella—faithful, loyal, vital, intense—danced, toiled, and loved—to her doom; how energetic, ambitious Mary Shrewsbury, like her mother before her, enjoyed imprisonment in the Tower because of her match-making intrigues; how William Cavendish became not only an earl, but one of the first colonists in Virginia and Bermuda; how Henry Cavendish died of his "sickliness and discontentment of mind"; how Henry Talbot, also, passed away before he could share the splendour or the thriftlessness of his race; how Charles Cavendish made Bolsover Castle a fit guest-house for the King, for whom his son prepared a famous masque and banquet; how Gilbert Shrewsbury, his presence-chamber crowded with spongers and creditors, pawned his plate and jewels, and how his younger brother and chief enemy, Edward Talbot, became eighth Earl in his stead, belong to an epoch which escapes the limit of this survey.



Photo by Richard Keene, Ltd., Derby

ENTRANCE HALL, HARDWICK HALL

CHAPTER XXIII

MY LADY'S MANSIONS

IT is universally conceded by our nation that the French have a sense of the theatre which we shall never possess. The only set-off we can produce is a pre-eminent "sense of the house." In France this has to a great extent died out. In French and in most continental cities the greater number of people live like pigeons in large cotes. It is the tendency of all towns, though in England the notion takes hold slowly. In the country the sense of the house is as strong as ever, with this change—that it is the day of the little house. Of the great house in its perfect sense as a home there are but few happy instances. It is the day of little things—little books, little songs, little pictures, little buildings, little frequent journeys, little incomes, and little sports. Above all, the little incomes! Little incomes laugh defiance at great houses. For great houses, as aforesaid, are great thieves. Bess and her Lord knew it, in the end, to their sorrow. Slowly English men and women have come to realise this, and not to aspire enviously to great houses. That notion was long a-dying, that obsession of the great house. Its long decline meant assuredly much that was tragic, wounding, self-torturing. Oh! those mistaken, ostentatious shams and pomposities of the early Victorian days

when many a kindly, highly cultured, hyper-sensitive group of persons dwelt the lives of immured cabbages! And all this because of false pride, because of a penury they deliberately huddled round them, like a coward, who flings his cloak over his head so that he may not see even the opportunity for the courage which must go to the changed order of things.

And so the little incomes of to-day—the day of the triumph of the exploitation of limited resources—laugh at the great houses because the first have been forced to learn that trick of defiance side by side with the bitter lesson of monetary limitations which they share with the last. Yet behind their defiance is a great admiration of the big mansions. And behind the admiration, if they but guessed it, a great sense of indebtedness. For it is the little incomes, and not the little houses, which laugh at great mansions. Is it not by virtue of the past life and compassion of the great houses that the little ones achieve their beauty in miniature, and, lastly, their sweet appropriateness to the usages of modern life? The great house begat these little ones of to-day—no hovels, but decent homes—which spring up all over England and Scotland and Ireland—in the hollows or heights of downs, in richly watered places, on ridges, by the fringes of woods, upon the sea flank—creeping up almost impudently to the very skirts of the great “places” which have passed into the traditions of history. Some of these remain to us as dazzling show places, some few are also emphatically homes. Whether applied in the present to this most beautiful and intimate purpose or not, all the great mansions of Elizabeth Lady Shrewsbury were most truly intended for sweet daily uses. Two principal houses had she of her

own—Hardwick and Chatsworth. Eight more George Talbot brought her—Wingfield, Sheffield, Rufford, Welbeck, Worksop, Tutbury, Bolsover. One smaller place he cherished for his old age, a little country house at Handsworth in the same county, and one more, as already explained, she in her old age founded—Owlcotes or Oldcotes—besides beginning the rebuilding of Bolsover Castle. Great houses indeed! Four of them, in especial, were widely sung and praised. How runs the curious old rhyme?

“Hardwicke for hugeness, Worsope for height,
Welbecke for use, and Bolser for sighte.
Worsope for walks, Hardwicke for hall,
Welbecke for brewhouse, Bolser for all.
Welbecke a parish, Hardwicke a Court,
Worsope a pallas, Bolser a fort.
Bolser to feast in, Welbecke to ride in,
Hardwicke to thrive in, and Worsope to bide in.
Hardwicke good house, Welbecke good keepinge,
Worsope good walkes, Bolser good sleepinge.
Bolser new built, Welbecke well mended,
Hardwicke concealed, and Worsope extended.
Bolser is morn, and Welbecke day bright,
Hardwicke high noone, Worsope good night;
Hardwicke is now, and Welbecke will last,
Bolser will be and Worsope is past.
Welbecke a wife, Bolser a maide,
Hardwicke a matron, Worsope decaide.
Worsope is wise, Welbecke is wittie,
Hardwicke is hard, Bolser is prettie.
Hardwicke is riche, Welbecke is fine,
Worsope is stately, Bolser divine.
Hardwicke a chest, Welbecke a saddle,
Worsope a throne, Bolser a cradle.
Hardwicke resembles Hampton Court much,

And Worsope, Welbecke, Bolser none such.¹
Worsope a duke, Hardwicke an earl,
Welbecke a viscount, Bolser a pearl.
The rest are jewels of the sheere
Bolser pendant of the eare.
Yet an old abbey hard by the way—
Rufford—gives more alms than all they.”

It is curious that Chatsworth, so famous in history, has no part in the rhyme. Save for an old engraving of it in the new, the present Chatsworth, no trace of the fabric of the second mansion, the house planned by William Cavendish the first, exists ; and in the grounds no relic is to be found belonging to the date of Queen Mary's imprisonment except a scrap of ivied ruin known as her “bower.”

What is the fate of the rest of the long list ? Wingfield is an exquisite ruined fragment. The relic of that which was once Sheffield Castle is only to be found thickly embedded among the workshops and factories of a great smoke-belching town ; and the whole property has passed to the dukedom of Norfolk.

Oldcotes, as we know, Bess Hardwick never finished, nor Bolsover, for that last duty fell upon her son, Sir Charles Cavendish, who “cleared away the loose cement and tottering stones and began to lay the foundation of the newe house at Bolsover,” only finished by his son, Marquis of Newcastle. Strangely enough, it is not this—the beautiful Elizabethan mansion, which witnessed now glorious pageants and now civil war—that remains for habitation, but a portion of the original stronghold. Says one descriptive writer : “The figure of Hercules, supporting the balcony over the principal doorway, is

¹ “None-Such”—one of the royal palaces at this time.

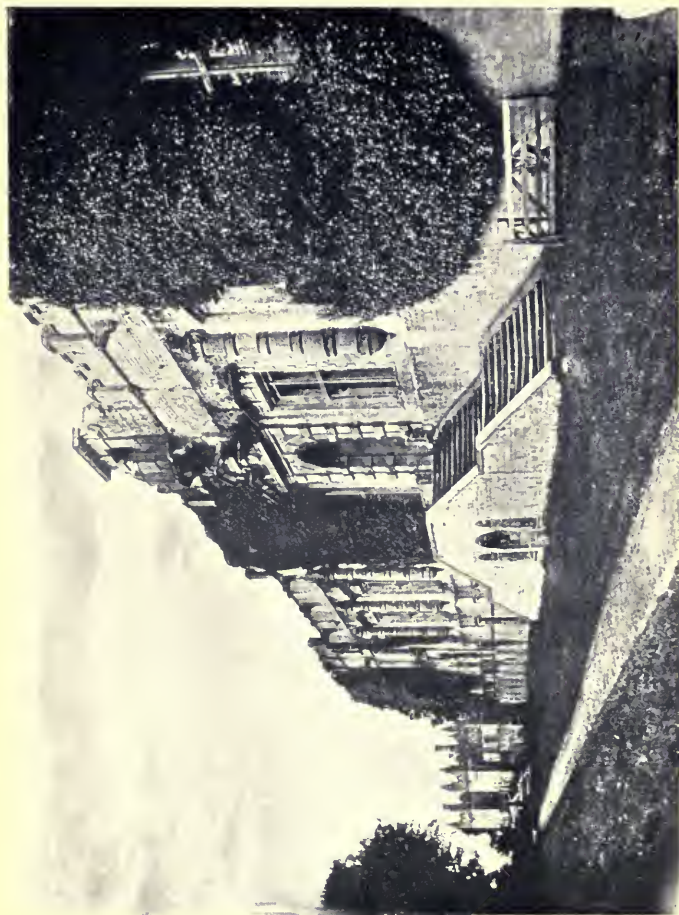


Photo by Richard Keene, Ltd., Derby

BOLSOVER CASTLE

an appropriate symbol of the Castle's strength. The fortress is habitable, and makes a very unconventional and picturesque residence, with its pillar parlour ornamented with old-fashioned devices ; its noble Star Chamber lined with sombre portraits of the twelve Cæsars and ceilinged with blue and gold to represent the firmament at night ; and its quaint bed-chambers, two of which are covered with pictures indicative of Heaven and Hades . . . pictures . . . of angels reclining on clouds, or wandering in delightful glades ; and of angels of darkness, hideous . . . and writhing in torment." The which, says this chronicler, so affected the conscience of one inhabitant that he effaced them—"took a lime brush and ruthlessly wiped out both sinners and saints." The ruin near this building must have stood finely "on the grand terrace to the south" in its heyday when the elasticity of good Bolsover steel spears and buckles was a household word in England.

Tutbury Castle lies a ruin by the Dove, unregretted, well detested by all who were ever immured there.

Welbeck—how true to the rhyme !—lasts and "will last"—"day bright," a "saddle," a place to "ride in," a great "parish," a home for use, for "good keepinge,"—in a word, an institution for posterity to wonder at. Such also is Rufford, one of the few great buildings which have escaped fire. Among the list of the disestablished monasteries it passed into the hands of the Talbots, who made good use of its Elizabethan gallery and its state chambers. On the other hand, the original manor house of Worksop—"the wise," the "pallas," the "throne," was burnt down in 1761, was "decaide" very soon. Bolser the "maid" as aforesaid is now grown very

grey, but is still lovely, the more wonderful in its isolation because of the ugly little new town below it. Welbeck "the wife" flourishes, has grown, is much increased.

Hardwick the "matron" endures. In her "hugeness," in her character of spacious court and hall, in her seclusion and peace, her well-being, her riches and comfort, well warmed with the sun of prosperity, as at "high noone"—in her rôle as "chest," as storehouse of unassailable fortunes, as a place "to thrive in," Hardwick is the chiefest of all these houses, because, saving the church of All Saints at Derby, with the monument Bess Shrewsbury erected in it to herself, and the almshouses in the same town, it is the only thing of all her "workes" upon which her sole impress remains. Into this grey stone house, which bears her maiden name, has passed her extraordinary and very fine "sense of the home," and the doggerel just quoted adds to that almost a portrait of herself. Time was when she wore stiff outstanding dresses, encrusted with network of jewels or bordered and lined with fur, like others who visited Court or the weddings and pageants of her circle. In the principal portrait of her, the one which hangs in the centre of the Cavendish group in the glorious Hardwick gallery—a stretch of 170 feet, of which the walls carry nearly two hundred portraits—she is, however, presented just in the character of matron and widow. Her child-bearing days were over, her schemes were many. One cannot read the rhymes quoted without feeling that when Hardwick is named in the jingle she herself passes in and out of the string of words, which in itself is like a ladies' chain in a country dance. She is in black velvet with a rich quadruple necklace of pearls.



Photo by Richard Keene, Ltd., Derby

PICTURE GALLERY, HARDWICK HALL
(Showing the fireplace and a portrait of Mary Queen of Scots)

Her chest, with gold and documents and household "stuff," goes with her; we hear the jingle of her household keys, her ringing, authoritative voice, meet the glance of those clear, keen eyes, and follow the line of the thin, sensitive mouth, which could help that far-seeing brain of hers so much. That mouth could flatter, but it could also speak with terrible sharpness; it could repeat a good joke, a spicy scandal, or quiver with grief; it could say tender things—"my juwell and love, my dearest harte"—and it could bargain finely. "Hardwick is hard," says the rhyme, and her lips seem to tighten to that phrase. She could certainly be both terribly hard and tender.

There is another smaller portrait of her, in her Countess's coronet and an ermine tippet, which is rather more gracious in expression than the stiff, be-ruffed, matronly picture above mentioned. Close about her are her husbands—all save Barlow. Most comfortable of these is Sir William Cavendish, sturdy, bearded, and well-liking, in his furred robe and flat cap. Close by, and matching the figure of Arabella Stuart in sheer pathos, is that of the quiet, childless Grace Talbot, whom Fate so soon made the widow of the much-travelled Henry Cavendish. It is that of a dumpy little woman in black, holding in one hand a single pale eglantine—the flower of the Cavendishes. Her reddish-brown hair, her pale lips, a spinet of which the under portion of the open lid is faintly decorated with red-winged cherubs, and a dark green table-cloth, are the only scraps of colour in the sombre scheme. Her psalter, with diamond notation, lies open at the words "Sois moy seigneur ma garde et mon appuy, Car en toy gist toute mon esperance."

In the same group one finds Burghley, rosy, astute, richly clad, a prince of dignitaries, than whom no statesman ever had richer experience of men and things, of power and place, of sovereigns and the royal caprice, who on the eve of death could still write to his first-born, over the trembling signature of "Your anguished father," the words "Serve God by serving of the Queen, for all other service is indeed bondage to the devil."

Very warm and full of life is the portrait of William Cavendish the younger, the Countess's favourite son. To him in his right as first Earl and ancestor of the Dukes of Devonshire belongs, after his mother, the whole of this glorious gallery, typical of this magnificent house.

The end wall is given up to the portraits of the three English Queens. In the centre is Elizabeth, magnificent and monstrous, the clothes hiding the woman, the whole art of portraiture merged in the painter's dogged intent to reproduce every detail of her jewels, her lace, and the birds, beasts, and reptiles with which her enormous, billowing dress is embroidered. On her right stands Queen Anne, very dull, complacent, and richly attired; on her left Queen Mary, solemn, handsomely robed, dignified. An opposite wall bears the other often-painted Mary, the Arch-Enigma, she whose personality, to my thinking, is so much more subtle and dominant than that of her magnificent English sisters. This is the famous Mary of Oudry's brush, graceful, simple, subtle, the face diaphanous and elusive. There is an odd likeness between the motto she chose for her dais and that which the baby Arabella bears on the jewel pendent from her necklace: "Pour parvenir



From a photo by Richard Keene, Ltd., Derby, after the picture by P. Oudry at Hardwick Hall, by permission of his Grace the Duke of Devonshire

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS

j'endure" is the legend. And both women bear witness to that determination in their faces, in their tragic fates. That and the old "En ma fin est mon commencement" ring in your ears as you turn from the gallery and from the beautiful presence-chamber with its wonderful coloured plaster frieze to the little bedroom dedicated to the relics of the Scots Mary. The curtains she embroidered, the coverings for the chairs, the tapestry, the very bed in which she slept and tossed and wept, are all proudly cherished. Mary never stayed at Hardwick, *pace* Horace Walpole, nor possibly ever saw it. Nor was she ever housed at the old Hardwick, which stands now like a ghostly, ruined parent of the newer building, at right angles to it. The old house served "Building Bess" not only as model for her new hall, but furnished her, it is said, with actual material. It was, for those days, a good model that she took, and its high and countless windows made it hygienically a great improvement upon the gloom of Tutbury and Sheffield. No trace of superstition or pettiness has gone to the building, begun soon after she acquired the house—either by purchase or by legacy from her brother James Hardwick—some years before the death of her fourth husband, and completed seven years or so after it—that is in 1597. At first, says tradition, she seems to have intended to make her home at the older house and reserve the new one for ceremonial and entertainment, "as if she had a mind to preserve her Cradle and set it by her Bed of State." The stones of that "Cradle" she eventually took for the "Bed," and into that bed she literally wove all that was best of herself. Of mere personal feminine vanity she expresses little, of personal importance much. She was fond of

her crest, and the modelled stags of her own family are devised to flatter her duly in an inscription (in the great drawing-room) to the intent that noble as is the stag, in all its animal perfection, its nobility is enhanced by bearing the arms of the Countess. She doted also on her initials. They are worked into the stone scrolling which adorns her four towers, into the main gateway, and into the low wall which flanks the square garden where you enter. They are repeated in the flower-beds. She must have loved signing her name also, for scarcely a scrap, it seems, of the household accounts concerning her buildings exists but bears evidence of her minute scrutiny. Here is her signature as it appears often repeated under such items as "thre ponde hyght pence," or at the close of a letter thus :—

*Your lo: most faythfull
freind and so bounde*

J Shrowesbury

The Hardwick wages-book between New Year, 1576, and the close of December, 1580, with the list of her men—stone-breakers, gardeners, moss-gatherers, thatchers, wall-builders, ditchers—was made up by her once a fortnight and signed. Inside the house too are her initials, with the arms of her father, the stags and the roses of the Hardwicks, and into a famous inlaid table (brought, it is said, by her son Henry from the East)



Photo by Richard Keene, Ltd., Derby

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS BED, NOW AT HARDWICK HALL

is woven the cryptic poetical motto of her father's family :—

“The redolent smell of aeglantyne
We stagges exault to the deveyne.”

This legend is to be faintly traced in the interior of the ruined old hall. With the exception of the Shrewsbury coronet and the initials, you find very little suggestion of the Talbots. Everywhere the arms of Hardwick predominate in panel, fireplace, and lock. They strike the eye the instant you enter the house by the great entrance-hall. Large and magnificent, they are set forth on the right wall : in heraldic language, “a saltire engrailed *azure* ; on a chief of the second three cinquefoils of the field,” set in a lozenge-shaped shield and bearing the aforesaid coronet. The supporters are two “stags *proper*, each gorged with a chaplet of roses, *argent*, between two bars *azure*.” To these supporters the lady had no right because her family had none. But she assumed them, turning to account the stag of her family crest. Her son William adopted a variation of this, and in the Devonshire arms of to-day we again find the wreathed stags *proper*, while the shield bears three harts' heads. In the Mary Queen of Scots bedroom you will find in plaster work again the Hardwick arms, but also those of Cavendish and of the Countess's mother, Elizabeth Leake. Needless to say, the house is built in the grand manner. The great entrance-hall runs to the height of two stories, and besides its paneling and old furniture has screens of tapestry. Just off the stairway on the left is the curious little chapel shut off from the landing by an open-work oak

screen. Close by is a state bedroom, and adjoining it is a fine dining-room, whence a minstrels' gallery leads to the wainscoted and tapestried drawing-room. The splendid presence-chamber, sixty-five feet long, thirty-three wide, and twenty-six high, is another remarkable feature, and besides its pictures and tapestry has the famous ancient frieze, already mentioned, in coloured plaster relief representing the Court of Diana. The choice of theme was, no doubt, out of compliment to the Queen, for her initials and arms are in this room substituted for those of the Countess, who, in spite of her dreams, never had the delight of receiving Elizabeth here.

In regard to the sheer details of furniture and tapestries the guide-books have sufficiently noted such items, and this is not the place for an inventory. But in the household lists, carefully catalogued and cherished, are noted "silver cloath of tissue and cloath of gold, velvet of sundry colours, needlework twelve feet deep, one piece of the picture of Faith and her contrary Mahomet, another piece with Temperance and her contrary Sardynapales." And there are others "wrought with Flowers and slips of Needlework," while a "white Spanish rugg," great chairs and little chairs, French stools, "a little desk of mother o' pearl, a purple sarcanet quilt," are duly noted, in addition to carpets and hangings galore storied with myth and legend. Good rich things over which to fight when it was a case of family quarrels! Many of these and the other famous tapestries with which the lovely house is crammed are being wisely guarded, and, where possible, delicately repaired, while taste and gracious sympathy with every object are turning the Hall into a place which is a perfect museum



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THE PRESENCE-CHAMBER, HARDWICK HALL

with the added grace of a house. The very ring—attached to the foot of the Countess's writing-table—through which she slipped the leash of her dog, is still preserved.

Set high upon a fine hill in the centre of a park, encircled with rolling country, and facing east and west, the great, old windows of Hardwick look out above colonnades upon a new world. At no great distance are mines like those which have spoiled Bolsover and Worksop. The masons still labour at the stonework of Hardwick, for storms have worn the elaborate scrolling of those four proud towers, and the flagged pathway from gate to house-door is pitted and hollowed by frost and rain and the feet of generations. And still it stands, a monument and a living record of one who knew in her strange, active life much grief and much joy, who loved flattery and self-assertion and the struggle for individual development, and yet could write in letters of stone over the door of her presence-chamber: "The conclusion of all thinges is to feare God and keepe His commaundements."

She had the great secret of living almost to the last in the "high noone" of her desires. When the western sun bathes her façade she lives again, walks again upon her terrace and under her colonnades. And with her goes that great procession, pathetic and vital, of her "workes"—her children, her friends, her buildings, her household gods, her intrigues, her dazzling dreams, her bargains—and all of them seem to have a part in the music of that duet of notions ever running in her head—"of bricks and mortar to yield grandeur, of human beings to yield wealth."

She has been turned into ridicule by Horace Walpole,

whose flippant vulgarity nevertheless acknowledged her magnificence. She was called shrew by a pompous bishop, but she had too much brain for a shrew. She could certainly scold—"like one from the banke"—but so could her royal mistress. In these two Elizabeths there is, after one allows for the difference in their actual circumstances, a strange likeness. Both were violent natures ; both, in spite of their extraordinary sense of dignity, had a strong dash of the hoyden. Both had immense vitality, relished life intensely, loved to play with schemes. Both were obstinate, affectionate, vindictive, pugnacious, essentially women of their era, a type to which Elizabeth herself set the measure and called the tune. While the sum of all sorrow is the same, their sorrows differed in detail. Elizabeth of England, called to the immense sacrifice of her womanhood for England, fell back in private on petty vanities, and had her reward in the love of the larger public of her day and in the enlightened homage of posterity to her sacrifice and her statesmanship. Elizabeth Shrewsbury justly refused to sacrifice herself to the official burdens put upon her earl, unjustly refused to go shares with him in their common responsibilities, and so in her the "combat for the individual" ran to exaggeration, with its harvest of sheer bitterness and errors. In body and soul she represented that spirit of individualism set in an epoch of intrigue, sensation, change, uncertainty, wide and violent contrast, in days of large treasons and international piracy, of high feeding and large ideas, of scented gloves, masks, doublets, and ill-managed kitchen heaps, of plot and counter-plot, of Court splendour and national drama.

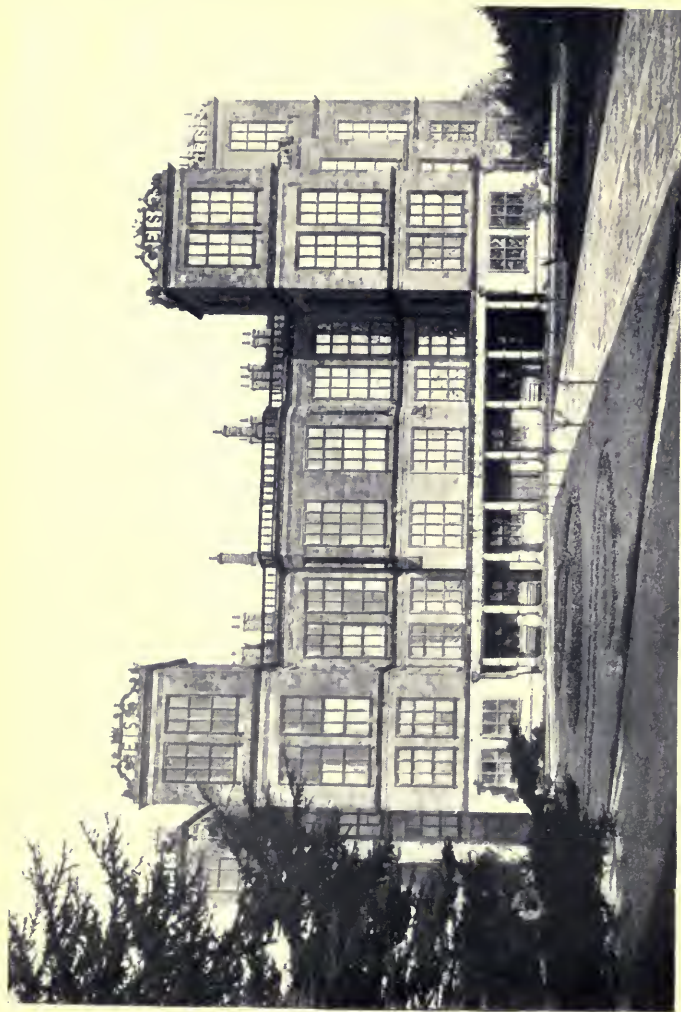


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HARDWICK HALL FROM THE WEST GARDEN

Tobie Matthew, Archbishop of York, preached a fine funeral sermon upon this "costly Countess," in which she was likened to the ideal virtuous woman of Solomon, while Hunter, on the other hand, ironically suggests that Massinger based his character of Sir Giles Overreach upon her. Lodge has termed her violent, treacherous, tyrannical. Such in many ways was the nature of England's Elizabeth. Yet both women were makers and builders, often blind, always resourceful, achieving immense results in their several capacities. And since the royal symbol of the one is the stately Tudor rose, so also shall the lovely "redolent aeglantyne" of the motto of the other entwine and weave through the ages the memory of all that was finest in the amazing Lady of Hardwick. With that sweet savour—regarding it as the final evaporation of her complex, rampant, thorny, vital nature—let all harsher thoughts of her now be chased away.

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